

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND
AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE
HOUSING**

At Sydney on Thursday 10 July 2014

The Committee met at 1.30 p.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. P. Green (Chair)

Ms J. Barham (Deputy Chair)

The Hon. D. J. Clarke

The Hon. R. H. Colless

The Hon. S. Cotsis

The Hon. M. R. Mason-Cox

The Hon. G. S. Pearce

CORRECTED

RESOLVED TO BE PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE ON 25 JUNE 2014

CHAIR: I welcome witnesses to the eighth hearing of the Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing. As you are aware, the inquiry is examining issues of significance regarding social, public and affordable housing in New South Wales. Before I commence I acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I also pay my respects to the elders, past and present, of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginals present. Today we will hear from representatives of the Department of Family and Community Services, particularly in relation to the Going Home Staying Home reforms and the tendering process. Before we commence I will make comments about procedures for today. Today's procedures will not have a public audience. However, the hearing is being recorded by Hansard and the transcript will be published online. There may be some questions that cannot be answered today. They can be taken on notice with answers to be provided within 14 days.

CORRECTED

RESOLVED TO BE PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE ON 25 JUNE 2014

MIKE ALLEN, Chief Executive, Housing NSW, Family and Community Services, on former oath:

NADA NASSER, Homeless Service Reform, Housing NSW, Family and Community Services, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: The answers have to be provided in just 14 days.

Mr ALLEN: It is normally 21.

CHAIR: It is normally 21, but we are aiming to get our report out by September so we resolved to give you less time.

Mr ALLEN: Thank you. I am sure we will comply.

CHAIR: I welcome both witnesses to the hearing. Would either of you like to make a statement about the particular topics we have discussed?

Mr ALLEN: I would like to make a very brief opening statement, Mr Chairman, if I may.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr ALLEN: Thank you kindly. I am pleased to be here today to respond to any questions on the State Government's homelessness reform package. It is an important opportunity to rectify some incorrect information that has been circulating in the media. This is particularly concerning as the misinformation directly impacts on the most vulnerable people in our society. It is important to remember that these reforms commenced almost two years ago when the then Minister for Family and Community Services issued a discussion or white paper. With this, the department participated in numerous consultation sessions across the State and received almost 70 submissions.

This valuable feedback assisted to build the current reform package, which is more than just the reforms to the specialist homelessness services system, and includes a number of other initiatives such as Link2home, which is the single statewide telephone homelessness line and an extension of the Start Safely program, and a new policy for unaccompanied children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Of course I will attempt to answer all of your questions this afternoon. If there are some that I need to take on notice, I will do so and ensure that we reply to those within 14 days.

CHAIR: I note in the Going Home Staying Home package that one of the great concerns we are hearing of are from some of the smaller providers that have missed out. I wonder can you explain exactly how those providers are going to be looked after or where they can come back into it if they have a niche area that they are looking after, in particular in rural and regional areas? How are we making sure that we are not just dropping services like the smaller providers for the sake of increasing the opportunity for big service providers? For instance, there is the Youth Homelessness situation in Wollongong that missed out.

Sometime ago they were telling this inquiry about how they would increase by 11 beds. I imagine they made all those projections based on the relationship with the Government, provision of services and funding. Probably a really good outcome would be to increase in youth homelessness beds by 11. Where will that lead to in the future, if there are no other providers who will give 11 beds in a particular region? What will happen? Who will be covering that type of situation?

Mr ALLEN: First it is important to note that for all smaller-end providers or Aboriginal organisations that are providers, as part of the pre-tender process they will all be provided with support to complete their tender applications. We defined a small organisation as generally one that would have five staff or fewer, but as I indicated all Aboriginal homelessness service providers that had prequalified were able to access up to three days of consultants support to assist them in preparing their tender. We took the view that that support should be provided through the sector so we funded what is known as the industry partnership to undertake that funding and to distribute it accordingly.

The industry partnership is made up of the three homelessness peaks—that is, Homelessness NSW, Yfoundations, which is the youth homelessness peak, and Domestic Violence New South Wales Service Management [DVSM]. They distributed that funding because we recognised that some smaller organisations

might need that level of support. Secondly, for any organisations that were unsuccessful in the tender process that were smaller or medium size organisations, they have access to what is known as the Service Support Fund. That fund is available for up to an 18-month period. We defined more precisely those small to medium size organisations.

CHAIR: I am sorry, Mike. We are a bit informal in the way we may do this.

Mr ALLEN: Sure.

CHAIR: We are reaching rather than just getting information.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Could you clarify the point about unsuccessful organisations? My understanding—and I would love to hear that this is wrong—is that when an organisation fails to win any tender but where they have lost services—perhaps they have applied for six tenders but only got three—there is no support available for them in that circumstance. Is that right?

Mr ALLEN: That is largely right, and I will clarify my comments. The Service Support Fund is available for those organisations that have been fully unsuccessful in the tender process. For other organisations that were successful but feel for some reason that they have not received the same level of funding or for other circumstances, while they are not eligible for the Service Support Fund there are other programs and initiatives that they might want to consider, and that is the unaccompanied minors initiative. That will go to tender in approximately two months time. That will be available for suitably qualified organisations who could be many of those who have been successful but not successful to the degree that they would have liked.

CHAIR: Mike, Mr Allen, in terms of Youth Homelessness in Wollongong, that would be an opportunity for them to pick up funding for the 11 beds that they probably projected a little while ago was going to come from the usual source. Is that right?

Mr ALLEN: Indeed. That is an opportunity for them. The unaccompanied minors initiative is one that is focused on young people under 16. Many of the youth homelessness organisations would be, I think, reasonably well placed to tender for that service.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Where is that funding from? When and how will that be rolled out? Are you saying that is an additional announcement?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is additional. You need to consider, as I mentioned in my opening comments, that this reform is more than just about the specialist homelessness services tenders. There is also the Start Safely program and the unaccompanied minors initiative that I mentioned. That will go to tender in approximately two months time. That is valued at approximately \$9 million per year for the next three years, so it is a \$27 million program, albeit that that tender will be available to suitably qualified providers over the course of the next couple of months or so. I am happy to be called Mike. Generally my answer to that is that Mr Allen is my father, so I am happy for you to call me Mike.

In relation to the other issue, properties, first, there is no reduction in the number of government properties that are available in the homelessness system. There are more than 1,300 government properties that are available for crisis or transitional accommodation. They are still all available in the system. In some cases the organisation managing those properties may change but in many cases it will still be the same organisation. The other point is that we encouraged tenderers to also put forward any proposals that they had to bring to their service proposal, either other properties, non-financial contributions or other financial contributions where that is available and a number of organisations, both large and small, have chosen to bring forward other properties that they have access to.

Ms JAN BARHAM: You are saying that some of the non-governmental organisations [NGO] that may have properties in their own right will be bringing them?

Mr ALLEN: Yes. We asked all of the tenderers to set out in their tender if they were bringing other non-financial contributions—properties principally—or financial contributions to the service they were proposing. As I indicated, a number of organisations, both large and small, have done that.

Ms JAN BARHAM: You are saying there will be no reduction in government properties. Do you mean government properties or do you mean Family and Community Services [FACS] properties?

Mr ALLEN: I mean properties owned by the Government. They would generally be properties owned by FACS or one of our legal entities, so that would generally be properties owned by the Land and Housing Corporation, properties owned by the Aboriginal Housing Office or, in a smaller number of cases, properties owned by the community services division of FACS.

Ms JAN BARHAM: I do not know that this is the case in the city, but are you aware that in regional areas some of the properties that have been used are Crown properties that are managed by local government and those councils, in some cases, are being pressured by the Crown to get a greater commercial return for the properties. We have seen this happening for some time in regional areas. I am aware of a property that was available under an emergency accommodation project that is no longer available because the Crown has put pressure on the council to get a greater return, despite the fact that the Homelessness Action Plan [HAP] had talked about this relationship with local government and the regional committees. I am not aware that that has been solidly grounded in terms of getting the outcome from local government. I know of another one where a council owned property was being used for a homeless service and it probably will not continue because of financial pressures. I wonder how much you have looked at the use of properties that are owned by the Crown or Government and whether they are still available?

Mr ALLEN: I understand that there are a relatively small number of properties that are local government owned. I am not familiar with how many of those may indeed be Crown properties. The more than 1,300 I referred to were certainly more clearly State Government owned properties rather than something that might otherwise generally be considered to be Crown. We have encouraged all of the existing property owners outside of our departmental owned government properties to continue to make those properties available to the homelessness system, and we have encouraged our successful tenderers and their partners to be active in their negotiations and discussions with those property owners and look to retain those properties in the system.

CHAIR: Will you be giving the same level of support in terms of pre-tender support to those applying to the unaccompanied minors tender?

Mr ALLEN: We have taken a view that we should provide support to organisations throughout this reform process. As I mentioned, we did that at the outset in the pre-tender process. We have also made business development advice available to all providers, successful and unsuccessful, to support them in either delivering their tender outcomes through the service packages, for example, support for joint working arrangements where they exist and there are a very large number of those across the State, but also business development advice for smaller organisations that have been unsuccessful in the process. We are yet to take a formal position on the unaccompanied minor's tender, but that has certainly been the approach we have taken so far. So, yes, we would actively consider providing some level of support as part of that next tender. We are still working through the parameters of that tender process.

CHAIR: I imagine that these people would be used to doing the other one and would suddenly come across a totally new reform package. The way it is worded could be somewhat arduous compared to what they are used to so I guess they would need some guidance.

Mr ALLEN: We certainly do not expect the tender process would be substantially different for the unaccompanied minors compared to the specialist homelessness services tender. We will keep things as consistent as we reasonably can for that very reason and, importantly, organisations that were unsuccessful in the tender and are going to apply for service support funding can also use that business support advice assistance to help them complete their service support fund application.

Ms JAN BARHAM: They will have no property, though. Are they meant to provide a service without access to a property?

Mr ALLEN: There are a range of other services that unsuccessful providers could undertake without access to property. The properties will be transitioning to the successful tenders over a three-month period. What we describe as the implementation phase will go from 1 August through to 30 October so that that is ample time to be able to manage the transition of those properties from one provider to another where that needs to take place. For other providers under the service support fund, we will consider each of those applications on a case-by-case basis, but we are satisfied that there are a range of other services that they could provide that do

not necessarily require them to have properties. As we mentioned in the last question, some of them might still have access to properties from other sources, in any case.

CHAIR: This is what is concerning and what people are nervous about. You are providing a good service that is well known in the local community. If you lose the tender, you lose the property. You then apply for some other funding. You get that funding but you are without a property. In so many ways that familiar operation is lost to that local community that knew where to get help. That is one of the concerns we are trying to stress.

Mr ALLEN: It is important to remember that there is no reduction in the government-owned properties. They are still there for the successful tenderers. It was a competitive tender process so the successful tenderers had to demonstrate a number of factors as part of their tender proposal. Part of that is publicising the services that will be available through their service package in those locations so that organisations, our advocates, other stakeholders and members of the community will know who the successful providers are and that information was placed on our website from the time that Minister Upton made the announcement so that is in the public domain.

Ms JAN BARHAM: It means that the services may have changed, does it not? What once was a specialist service may now be a generalist service. I will use the example that is receiving a lot of publicity in the city but also in the regions. A women's refuge, run by women for women only now might be a generalist service where men might also be housed and it might be run by a faith-based organisation. That is a huge change when your own documentation talks about trust, building relationships and support that are necessary for these services to work, particularly when you are dealing with women and children subject to domestic violence. How does that incredible shift in service delivery and operators sit comfortably under a competitive tendering process? How is that analysed or assessed or, indeed, how is the change made when it goes against all the research and evidence about what works?

Mr ALLEN: There is a long answer to your question. If you would allow me, I would like to give you the full detail because there are a number of—

Ms JAN BARHAM: Can you clarify first of all that is what is happening? Am I right in saying that we are losing specialist services? Some of the experienced long-term operators where trust, support and relationships have been built up are going to change over to generalist services. Women's refuges may have men working on the premises, which would go against all the known evidence and logic and research of how to deal with those services.

CHAIR: We are saying that it is certainly not mixing like for like.

Ms JAN BARHAM: It is yes or no. You said there has been misinformation provided. That has been a core issue. Can you clarify if that is right?

Mr ALLEN: The answer to your question is no and it is important, if you allow me, because people have described things as generalist services and that is not correct. People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as we all know, have diverse needs and they need services that are flexible and are able to respond to their changing needs. One of the objectives of this reform is to promote integration and collaboration between services and consolidating some individual services into connected service packages in fact improves service integration and flexibility and allows services to provide a range of responses that a client may need.

Seventy-nine of the new service packages target only one client group. So 80 of the 149 only target one client group—for example, women, young people or men. Some packages have single client groups such as multicultural families, single men and women with mental health needs, people with other complex needs, transgender people or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning [LGBTIQ] people. This does not mean that service packages that have multiple target groups, cross-client target groups, will be either generic or a one-size-fits-all service. Nor does it mean that these service packages will not have specialised responses for target client groups.

The preferred providers have demonstrated a capacity to deliver specialised responses for specific client groups or have, through that process, established a joint working arrangement where another specialised service—part of that working arrangement—will cater to individual client groups such as women and children

experiencing domestic violence and family violence. Sixty-nine of the new service packages are for cross-client target groups and 67 of those include women in the specialised case mix

Ms JAN BARHAM: So they are or are not specialist or generalist?

Mr ALLEN: They are cross-client target services. What that means is there are some services that are targeted at—

Ms JAN BARHAM: That means generalist.

Mr ALLEN: No, it does not mean generalist. It means that they have got a wide range of clients that they need to assist in that location and that there are specialised services that need to be provided to that client within that service package, within that range of cross-client target groups.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Are we going to lose women's refuges? I am looking for a simple answer, Mr Allen, just like everyone else.

CHAIR: Mr Allen, what the member is after is a case study of how a situation could arise where a women's refuge would be compromised by a mixed refuge. Can you just walk us through what would happen in a situation like that?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I can. First, there are no government-owned properties that are closing. In some cases those which are sometimes known as refuges, sometimes they are crisis facilities, sometimes they are what we call transitional, the organisation managing that property might change but indeed the refuge itself is not closing. An example might be one that came up recently in Eastwood. A women's refuge operated by an organisation called Erin's Place took a decision that they were not going to continue operations because they were unsuccessful in the tender. That particular property is a government-owned property. It will continue as a women's only refuge. It will now be operated and is now being operated by CatholicCare and there is a woman in there with three or four children in that particular property who is continuing to be assisted.

Men and women will not be expected to share crisis accommodation. That is not in the system now; it is not going to be in the system in the future. In fact, there is a contractual obligation in the tenders that men and women do not share accommodation, particularly because, as you would expect and well understand I am sure, victims escaping domestic and family violence will have issues with that and it is not expected that they will share accommodation in the one facility.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Thank you for coming here this afternoon. I am representing hundreds of people and I have attended many meetings across the State with a number of my Labor colleagues and council colleagues from different political parties. We have been talking to managers on the ground and community members in regional communities. I just want to tell you—and if you can pass the message on to the Minister—that there is a lot of distress amongst not only the staff and managers of refuges and youth refuges but also the clients. I have been speaking to former clients and community members. People are outraged, particularly in the regions where they have built these services from the ground up and they have the local knowledge and expertise. I come to you bearing the information from the ground. First I would like to ask have you or the Minister visited any regional refuges?

Mr ALLEN: I cannot speak on behalf of the Minister but, yes, I certainly have.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Which one?

Mr ALLEN: A number over the years.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: What about recently, since the changes?

Mr ALLEN: I have not had the opportunity to visit any in the last couple of months but I certainly have visited a number of refuges over the years and spoken with the managers and the operators of those organisations and those services. But in terms of the other parts of your question, yes, I appreciate this is a very unsettling time for those organisations that have been unsuccessful but we have also put in place what is known as the Sector Employment Assistance Scheme. That is there and we are funding that again at arm's length.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I understand that but in the past couple of months have you or any of your district Family and Community Services [FACS] officials visited the refuges on the ground that are affected?

Mr ALLEN: Our FACS district staff are out and about on the ground on a regular basis. They are talking with both the successful and unsuccessful tenderers and many of those discussions have taken place at the facilities, the refuges or the other properties that those services are operating. The other important point to make is that all of the service packages that were subject to this tender, the 149 across New South Wales, were developed at a district level and they were developed in consultation with the service providers and other relevant stakeholders in those districts.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You are saying that the 15 district FACS offices did engage the local refuges, youth refuges and the local providers throughout this two-year process?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is what I am saying.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: That is what you are saying?

Mr ALLEN: That is right. There has been a series of consultation processes that began with the release of the discussion paper a couple of years ago. There were consultation sessions in each of our districts—bearing in mind the districts were not in place at that time, but there were more than 15 consultation sessions undertaken across the State and there were the 70-odd submissions that I mentioned that were received as part of the process.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Because I am being told on the ground that there was very little consultation and very little opportunity for the local providers to provide input about the work they did at a local level and the evidence in terms of the people they served. Many of the people they served were women only or women and their children. Many of these services have told me that they were working in collaboration with other services across their district or region. They also were telling me that your department, I think, had given them confidentiality agreements to sign so they could not talk about this process. I am being asked questions and I—

Mr ALLEN: I am happy to give you an answer. First, prior to our district structure being in place—and we put the district structure in place in September last year—there were a range of regionally based Family and Community Services staff across the department, so both Housing people, Community Services, and Ageing, Disability and Home Care people. There were also regional homelessness committees that were established across the State and had been operating for a couple of years prior to our localisation arrangements being put in place.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Were the service providers on the ground members of those regional homelessness committees?

Mr ALLEN: The members of those committees were a mix of staff from our department, from other government departments and a variety of non-government service providers in that location. They were regionally based; they met on a number of occasions; they were provided with information and considered things such as regional supply and demand profiles; they considered what should be reasonable homelessness targets for their particular location; they received qualitative information such as service mapping that highlighted any potential service gap; and they had information and discussed what services they thought were working well and what services they thought might need to change within their location. That certainly built on all of the years of operation of the specialist homelessness service system.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: There are two reports that either you or former Minister Goward commissioned. One is the Deloitte report and one is the PricewaterhouseCoopers report. Did those two reports advise you in terms of this change in allocating funding to homelessness and specialist homelessness services?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, they did.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Can you provide me with the cost of those two reports?

Mr ALLEN: I will take that as a question on notice. I do not have that information available today. But those reports provided important guidance in the reform process.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I found that the focus of the Deloitte report was mainly on population rather than the specialist service. According to the latest Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] information domestic violence has increased. I am concerned that domestic violence was not a key priority area in this process, particularly domestic violence against women.

Mr ALLEN: I can assure you absolutely that it was. The work that Deloitte Access Economics did with us in developing a recommended approach for guidance in resource allocation was not just done in isolation. There were a variety of non-government and other government stakeholders that participated in the process with Deloitte over a number of months in developing that work. But there were, importantly, 12 key factors that were taken into consideration in developing some of that work. Indeed, some of that work was population based or demographic.

If I could just tell you the list of them, they were: age; gender; income; Indigenous status; mental health; drug and alcohol use; accompanying children; socio-economic disadvantage based on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas [SEIFA] index; remoteness; housing stress; importantly, domestic and family violence; and severe overcrowding. There were three principal sources for us of that information; that was the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] and BOCSAR, as you mentioned, as well as information from the Department of Health. All of this is fairly public information. They were the key factors that were taken into account in developing the approach.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I see they have looked at age and gender but they do not look at women. There is no women-specific category. Is there a reason why?

Mr ALLEN: Gender was a specific category so that provided information on men and women and it also separately provided information on those people with accompanying children. That would have identified as part of that process women with accompanying children as it would have done, I guess, men with accompanying children.

Ms JAN BARHAM: It is not clear how the domestic violence issues were assessed. I hope at some stage you will be able to deliver more of the background information that Deloitte used to define the indices and the needs structure. In relation to the services that are available to meet the needs in the regions, it does not appear that you have factored in whether or not transport is available for people to get to those services. Service provision and service need only correlate if people can access them.

Mr ALLEN: Certainly.

Ms JAN BARHAM: It is not mentioned in here whether or not that was an issue. I submitted the questions because I cannot understand the situation in my region of the North Coast. It has a high Aboriginal population, high domestic violence rate, low income rate, high mental illness issues and high drug and alcohol use. There is no affordable public transport and there is high housing unaffordability. Every negative index is there but it has the lowest per unit cost in the State. I cannot see how this was all worked out as a very complex cost-effective arrangement when at the end of the day the region that I know well and know the needs of is the lowest funded in the State. Can you explain how this analysis is worked out to return funding that does not appear? It is half of the Sydney per unit cost.

Mr ALLEN: First, all of the factors that you have mentioned—mental health, drug and alcohol use and aboriginality—were covered by the 12 key factors that I mentioned. They were determined through the consultation process with the people from Deloitte Access Economics that I mentioned. Other people outside of government involved in the process represented peak organisations, service providers themselves and formerly homeless people. From memory, at least one homeless person was included. I am clear about that because I was there; there was at least one formerly homeless person in that consultative group.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Do you have documentation of a process that went on—

Mr ALLEN: I am happy to provide on notice information about that process. Importantly, one of the other factors was remoteness. That in part goes to the issue you mentioned about transport. Secondly, these factors were also considered by our district staff in the development of their service packages. To reiterate, those

packages were not developed centrally; they were developed in each of our 15 districts in consultation with the service providers in their district. As no doubt you have noticed, all the service packages across the State look a bit different. Different districts have taken different approaches. That is appropriate because we wanted to be clear that these service packages should be about the local needs of local people and that they were developed by the local staff working in those districts.

Ms JAN BARHAM: That is not what is being said. You said that the remoteness issue was taken into account. That is my point. Remoteness is defined as distance. They have used an assumption and a weighting about the distance to a service, but it does not indicate any assessment of whether transport is available. It does not matter if something is only five kilometres away; if there is no public transport, or affordable public transport, then a service is irrelevant.

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

Ms JAN BARHAM: This document tells me only that it is about distance. There is no mention of transport.

Mr ALLEN: That is right because that document was designed to provide guidance. The transport factor cannot be taken into account in such a high-level document and process because it is very locally specific. That is the point you make. That is why the service packages were developed by our local staff who live and work these locations and who will be more familiar across the State with the many variations and complexities of local transport arrangements than we would be centrally or that we could draw down from any statistically relevant and available data. There is Australian Bureau of Statistics data and you are correct that we have information on remoteness that broadly covers some issues. However, the other local transport issues or circumstances cannot be analysed through any data sources because they are all so different. That is why we took the approach that districts should develop the service packages because they are the people who live and work in these places and they understand those local needs far better than any of the modelling that you referred to in that report can sensibly and reasonably take into account.

Funding has not been reduced in any district across the State. The funding for all districts has either remained the same or been increased, including in Northern New South Wales, for the Specialist Homelessness Services [SHS] program. Overall, the SHS program has an additional \$10 million this year and going forward from last year. That means there will be approximately \$138 million in 2013-14 and \$140 million in 2014-15 and in future years. I suspect you are talking about the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness [NPAH] funding that has not yet been reflected across the districts. That is for the very valid reason that it is still subject to negotiation with the Australian Government.

There is a two-stage process for national partnership agreements. The first stage is known as the multilateral stage; that is, all States and Territories and the Commonwealth agree to sign up to the agreement. In this case the Commonwealth is providing approximately \$30 million to New South Wales this financial year. The second stage of that agreement process is known as the bilateral stage. That is where each individual State and Territory negotiates an implementation or project plan with the Australian Government that sets out how and where the money will be spent. The \$30 million for New South Wales is very pleasingly available. Our Government has signed up to that agreement, as have most other States and Territories. We are now in the negotiation phase and working very hard to reach agreement with the Commonwealth about how and where that money will be spent.

I am sorry if I sound a bit like a broken record, but the other funding that is not included in that \$138 million is the additional funding for the Start Safely Program. That program is targeted to women and children escaping domestic violence. That is an additional \$10 million a year over three years. That money is distributed on an ongoing basis. I cannot tell you exactly where that money will be spent because it is needs-based expenditure. Knowing the needs on the North Coast, I am sure some will be spent there, as will some of the NPAH funding. The \$9 million and \$27 million over three years in unaccompanied minors funding is also yet to be distributed because we have to go through a tender process. There is more money to come for districts across New South Wales, but they have all had an increase in their SHS funding.

Ms JAN BARHAM: But there has been no assessment of whether or not the previous funding was adequate to meet current or future needs if there was no continuation of the NPAH funding. That is a point with regard to the delay and the unknown factor of what the process will be to obtain any money and the distribution of the money. There is a lack of continuation of existing services because they have been unsuccessful with

Going Home Staying Home. You are looking at a lot of processes which have not been assessed and which are being changed and redefined, and there are new providers. There is a great deal of change happening in a very volatile area. You still have not answered my question about how you justify the per unit cost being lowest in an area of greatest need—the Mid North Coast and the North Coast. You are saying that the weightings and distribution of the resource allocation model were dealt with at a district level. Am I right that this is guidance?

Mr ALLEN: Yes. I will give a specific answer. That report—

Ms JAN BARHAM: You could make further information available about how the Deloitte document was used to define the district allocations.

Mr ALLEN: That is correct. However, I can tell you this afternoon that each tender package has specified a global amount of funding available. As I indicated, that has increased in all districts. The budget was based on the number of clients to be assisted and the level of effort required to support clients with different needs and complexity. It very deliberately did not specify per unit costs because that was something that we asked each of the tenders to consider in putting forward their proposal.

Ms JAN BARHAM: But you had already defined the dollar value for packages for the districts.

Mr ALLEN: That is correct.

Ms JAN BARHAM: I am trying to understand how you can say that this all being developed by the providers when you have predetermined the amount available, how many people they have to service and what services must be provided. There is not much scope there and it does not necessarily reflect an increased number of people being serviced. Despite the last census, we saw an 18 per cent increase. It does not factor in the loss of the NPAH money, future need or the CPI.

Mr ALLEN: I have a couple of answers to that question. You have raised a number of points. I will use Northern New South Wales as an example. The SHS funding level for that district has increased substantially.

Ms JAN BARHAM: By \$1 million, but there was a loss of \$3 million in NPAH funding.

Mr ALLEN: As I said, the NPAH funding for this year is yet to be distributed. We are still negotiating that with the Commonwealth, so I cannot tell you this afternoon where that will go. However, there was an increase in the SHS funding allocation for Northern New South Wales. Importantly, as I mentioned, we specified the global amount for each package. It was up to the providers to determine in their proposals how they saw that playing out across the case mix. There is a case mix in each of the packages; there are people who have lower needs and some with much higher needs. That needed to be determined by each of the tenderers as part of submitting their proposals.

CHAIR: So it is likely that the NPAH funding could make its way back to that area.

Mr ALLEN: As I said, there are three lots of funding that will still be distributed: the NPAH funding, the unaccompanied minors funding and the Start Safely funding. The Start Safely funding will be distributed across the year. That service is provided to women and children escaping domestic violence and it is allocated on a needs basis. There is not a district budget as such; there is a global statewide budget, and that is \$10 million a year over three years or \$30 million-plus in total.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: We have non-government and community bodies that are allocated public housing that they then allocate to people within their community or covered by them. Is that correct?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Do any of these non-government community organisations have any housing of their own to allocate? Are they simply allocating a portion of public housing that has been allocated to them to allocate. Is that the situation?

Mr ALLEN: Our community housing providers have three sources of housing, including government-owned properties that are provided to them that they manage. They are also provided with funding to lease

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properties in the private rental market; that is, they would lease properties from L. J. Hooker and then sublease to a tenant. They also have access to other properties that they might own themselves. Sometimes those properties are provided through philanthropic sources or by local government. They could also be properties which they are asked to manage on behalf of other non-government organisations but which are still allocated as social housing. In New South Wales we have one waiting list, one application form and one eligibility assessment process regardless of whether people apply to a community housing provider or through one of our FACS offices. It is all the same assessment and all the same list.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Let us take the first two of those three, that is, public housing provided by the department or housing that has been built with public funds.

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Is there much abuse of that power given to community bodies to allocate that housing in the past?

Mr ALLEN: No, there is not that I am aware of. Part of what we have put in place with the single social housing system is that those community housing providers allocate properties off the same waiting list. There is only one waiting list so they allocate from that waiting list. In fact, they have limited and controlled access to our computer-based waiting list so that they can make those allocations in the same way as our FACS staff would do to public housing that the Government manages.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: I am a bit confused. With regard to the first category, public housing allocated to these bodies to then allocate to others, are you saying that they all work off the one list?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Then what is the purpose of allocating it? Why would it not be allocated directly by the department? Why would you go through an agent, as it were, to allocate that housing?

Mr ALLEN: Because it results in an improved service system. We wanted to put in place a service system that literally had no wrong door. You could go to your community housing provider or you could come to our government department and receive the same service and in turn be allocated off the one waiting list. Importantly, there are some locations where we do not have a Department of Family and Community Services office but a community housing provider might have an office. That provides a better service system because it means the Government does not have to have an office in every one of those locations.

As an example could I use perhaps Broken Hill? Broken Hill has, last time I checked, about 150 public housing properties. They are all managed by an organisation called Compass Community Housing. It was very difficult for the Government to run that 100-property portfolio, did not really justify much more than one person and over the years we struggled. But the community housing provider is able to offer that service and, frankly, it is a more cost effective way in that example and in others than the Government providing that service directly.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: I understand. Setting aside regional areas, you would certainly be well covered in the metropolitan area of Sydney, would you not?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: You would not need to rely upon those organisations just to allocate properties to people who are on a common waiting list.

Mr ALLEN: We do not rely on them but they are still in the metropolitan area part of the service system, and they have access, as I have mentioned, to some other resources that are not available to our department, so they contribute those—

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: I am not talking about the properties that they have themselves, that they have raised the funds and they have built themselves; I am talking about public housing. Why would properties, for instance in the metropolitan area of Sydney, be allocated through such bodies when the department fully covers the metropolitan area?

Mr ALLEN: In some cases there have been a variety or a number of programs over the years where the Government would part fund some of the accommodation and require the community housing provider to part fund that same accommodation and they could make that contribution either through equity, through some of their own funds if they had them available, or through debt if they were borrowing. So that has helped increase the portfolio of social housing properties and that is the kind of contribution they can make.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Let us not talk about those properties. Let us talk about those that are fully publicly funded. I understand the proportion given by these organisations. Is there any housing fully financed by the department that is distributed in the metropolitan area through these community bodies?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, there are. Across the State there would probably be something in the order of 20-odd thousand plus properties that would be government owned that are being managed by a community housing provider. What advantage does that provide? It offsets some of the Government's costs in managing that housing. If you are a tenant of a community housing provider you are eligible for Commonwealth rental assistance, which a public housing tenant is not, and part of the management service that those providers undertake is that they have to deal with any of the maintenance and repairs issues from their own rental income.

(Short adjournment)

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: How many community bodies are there on the list that are service providers and is it possible to get a list?

Ms NASSER: I will take that as a question on notice. I think there are approximately 130. I cannot be clear on that but I will take it as a question on notice.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Take it on notice, so that we can have a list of who those service providers are.

Ms NASSER: Yes. They all have to be registered, so that information is publicly available.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Are you able to provide, against each service provider, how many units of public housing have they been allocated? Can you do a break-up?

Ms NASSER: Yes.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: So we know exactly, with each organisation, how many are fully funded by the Government.

Ms NASSER: Yes and we would generally determine those to be Government owned.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: And those in partnership where the private service provider obtains the funds from elsewhere and it is done in partnership with the Department. Then there is the third area where they are provided funds.

Ms NASSER: Yes, the leasehold properties.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: If we could have a break-up of that too?

Ms NASSER: Yes, we have certainly got the first two. I am not sure—but again, we will deal with that in the question on notice—whether we have the information about all the privately owned properties that they might have access to, whether they own them themselves or whether they are owned by other people.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: The situation is, I expect, that those properties that are fully funded by the Government remain in the ownership of the Department?

Ms NASSER: Of the Government, that is correct.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: So the title is never lost to those properties.

Ms NASSER: That is generally correct. The Government, with some of the nation-building and economic stimulus plan properties, the then government did take a decision to transfer title of those properties, which was approximately 6,000 in total, on the basis that those organisations had to contractually commit to use the title to borrow and to produce approximately another 1,200 properties, in total, from those borrowings over the course—

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: When was that decision made?

Ms NASSER: The original decision was made by the previous Government, I think in approximately 2010, and the vesting of those titles has taken place over the course of the last three years, some under the previous Government and some under the current Government.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Is there a list of those approximately 6,000 properties?

Ms NASSER: Yes.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Can you take it on notice to provide a list of where those 6,000 properties that were publicly funded, where their ownership to title now lies?

Ms NASSER: Yes and as part of that process, yes I can provide that answer.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: You can say that there have been no service providers who have had their power to allocate public property, publicly owned housing, that there have been no service providers who have had that right terminated because they have not acted according to the guidelines or for some other purpose?

Ms NASSER: In all honesty, not that I can recall but I will take it as a question on notice.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Go back, say, five or six years.

Ms NASSER: We will go back as far as we reasonably can. An organisation that has access to Government properties, through these community housing providers, is required to maintain registration under the regulatory code that applies. If, for some reason, they breach that then they could be removed, their registration could be cancelled and, in that case, the properties would then transfer to the management of another organisation.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: I assume you would have a record of those that have had this right rescinded?

Ms NASSER: That information is made publicly available. We do have a Registrar of Community Housing for organisations in New South Wales. That is a statutory appointment and the information of the registration status of organisations is made available on their website. And if an organisation has had their registration cancelled, then that information is also made publicly available on the website. Information is also made available on the website if the Registrar has also notified an intention to cancel. So if, in effect, they have issued a Show Cause Notice to a provider, that information is also made publicly available on the website.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Is that information kept on the website and if so, for how long?

Ms NASSER: Historically, I am not sure off the top of my head how long that information remains on the website but it is a reasonable period.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: When you say "a reasonable period", what sort of period do you think it is?

Ms NASSER: I would think it would have to be in excess of 12 months.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Let us go back five years. But you are quite definite that it is now, and has been for as long as you can remember, a situation where properties that are fully funded by the Department or partially funded by the Department, that the recipients of those properties, they come off a common list. There is no power of those service providers to pick and choose who they put into those housing units?

Ms NASSER: The common waiting lists which we call Housing Pathways, has been in place for a number of years prior to that. All of the people that were assisted by community housing providers were required to meet the same public housing eligibility criteria and they were also required to have been on the public housing waiting list. But prior to Housing Pathways, we did not have the technology or a mechanism to have a single waiting list so, in those days, individual providers would have maintained their own waiting list but, on the same basis, people had to meet social housing eligibility criteria.

In some cases, community housing providers rent their properties to people who might not necessarily be eligible but they are not social housing properties, they are what we call affordable housing and they would be on different rental arrangements, so that is usually key workers and we usually refer to those as teachers or nurses or police in particular locations. So social housing has to be allocated from one waiting list, affordable housing, and the example of that would be the National Rental Assistance scheme that was funded by the Commonwealth, where people pay up to 80 per cent of market rent. They are not necessarily required to meet public housing eligibility criteria. We can answer that because it is a detailed answer.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Would you be able to provide a list of those service providers in the metropolitan area of Sydney who actually allocate properties? I understand the regional, because the Department may not have a presence there, but can you give a list of those that do allocate properties within metropolitan Sydney?

Ms NASSER: Yes, we can provide that information as a subset of the total number of providers, those that operate in the metropolitan area of Sydney.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: For those who are in the metropolitan area, where there is coverage by the Department, you say there are sound policy reasons why they are allocated through those bodies, rather than by the Department directly?

Ms NASSER: The allocation to the tenants, if it is social housing in a Government-owned or Government-provided property, comes from the one waiting list. Over time, because the community housing sector has been in place since approximately 1982, various governments have determined in their policy decisions whether they are reasonable things to do or not.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Are you able to provide some detail as to—I am trying to find out the reasoning, in the metropolitan area of Sydney, for the Department to hand over the authority to private service providers to allocate public housing in metropolitan Sydney.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I can provide that information. In general terms, there are financial and other reasons. As I have mentioned, one of the financial reasons is that the tenants of those organisations, unlike public housing tenants, are able to apply for Commonwealth rental assistance and that gets captured as part of the rental authority.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: Would that be the only reason?

Mr ALLEN: That is one of the reasons. That is one of the main financial reasons. One of the others is that they operate on a lower cost basis because they all have PBI status, they are all registered as charities, and they generally are not required to pay GST. So at the very least there are generally 10 per cent savings.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: There are a number of reasons?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: As that is the case, would you like to take that question on notice to enable more fuller consideration?

Mr ALLEN: Yes. I am happy to do that.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Was a peer review conducted of the PWC and Deloitte reports?

Mr ALLEN: The PWC report, as I recall, was largely a report that provided detailed demographic and population information.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Was there a peer review?

Mr ALLEN: There was certainly third party endorsement of the report that was provided through the consultation process with external providers in the development of that work, and that included peak bodies.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Who are the third parties?

Mr ALLEN: Okay, they were the homelessness peaks. We put in place at the very early stages of this reform process two key reference bodies. The first was what we call the sector reference group.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, I understand that. I have read all of that material. I do not want to know that it was endorsed. I want to know whether there was a peer review of those two reports.

Mr ALLEN: I am not aware that there was a separate peer review of either of those reports, but they were not developed in isolation of a range of views of other stakeholders and other key contributors.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: The Land and Housing Corporation's annual report states that there are 1,496 crisis accommodation dwellings that are managed. Are the 1,300 to which you and the Minister referred part of the 1,496?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is correct. Sometimes there is some blurring in the larger number between those properties that are used for crisis purposes and those used for what we call transitional purposes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You and the Minister referred to the 1,300; what happens to the other 196 properties?

Mr ALLEN: They are still available to provide assistance to people in the homelessness context.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Are they managed by the housing department or by providers?

Mr ALLEN: They are generally managed by non-government organisations. What can I give you as an example?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, that is fine.

Mr ALLEN: CRC.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: That is fine. Have you or an accountancy firm conducted a property valuation of the 1,300 properties you talk about?

Mr ALLEN: The Land and Housing Corporation, as part of its annual valuation process, values all of its portfolio. So those properties, I think I am reasonably safe in assuming, would have been valued as part of that process.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Can you take that question on notice and provide documentation to the Committee of the valuation of those 1,300 properties? Those 1,300 properties about which you talk will be transferred to the successful tenderers, is that correct?

Mr ALLEN: Some of them will be. Some of them will continue to be operated by the successful tenderers which are the current organisations operating them already. Not all 1,300 are going to have a change of management.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Most of them will.

Mr ALLEN: No, I do not believe that is the case.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I am happy to talk you through it. You will provide that valuation of the 1,300 properties?

Mr ALLEN: We will take that as a question on notice, yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Are there a number of refuges in the 1,300 properties about which you talk? Do you talk about a number of those 1,300 properties being used as refuges?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Are you asking for the individual valuations of each of those 1,300 properties?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Or a total valuation.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is a very different number.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: The total valuation of the 1,300 properties.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Okay.

Mr ALLEN: Yes. That is what I was assuming was the information being provided.

Ms JAN BARHAM: As this issue has been raised in the inquiry by a number of people, can you clarify how you determine the valuation, whether it is as per private property or whether the use is factored in and changes or affects the valuation in some way? We have heard the issue of valuation of rent raised a number of times for specific properties.

Mr ALLEN: I think we answered that question in either the first and/or second hearing, but I am happy to take it as a question on notice and provide information about the valuation methodology that is used for this portfolio.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Thank you.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Having interrupted you once, you are not asking for the actual addresses of refuges?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, no.

Mr ALLEN: No. We would not be in a position to provide those because—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, I am not asking because I already know. Do you have a number of crisis accommodation properties that were used specifically as refuges for youth and women only prior to these changes? Do you have a number?

Mr ALLEN: I do not have that specific information available today. What I can be clear with you about is, as I have said, that none of the more than 1,300 government-owned properties are being lost to the homelessness system. Some of those are used as refuges. That is a very generalised and loose description. Sometimes they are described as crisis properties. Different people have different definitions.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But when you look at the names of those refuges that no longer will operate as women's refuges, that is what they are called, for example, "X Women's Refuge". That is why I am using that word and being very specific.

Mr ALLEN: Sure. I understand that you are being specific, but not every refuge uses the name or the word "refuge" in its title.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I understand that.

Mr ALLEN: So it is a bit difficult to determine. We can certainly give you information on the number of crisis properties and we will take it as a question on notice and do our best to provide.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Mr Allen, there is so much distress out in the community. People are so upset and angry about what is happening. They are concerned about the refuges that house women who have escaped domestic violence with their children or on their own, or that provide specialist support and accommodation for women who are survivors of child sexual abuse or have survived sexual assault or who are dealing with mental health issues. They are very, very concerned. This is why we need to find out how many of these refuges existed before these changes? With the new changes you are just transferring a whole lot of properties to the successful tenderers, is that right?

Mr ALLEN: Sorry, I am absolutely not trying to be difficult but that is a very broad generalisation. As I have indicated, many of the properties in the system will continue to be managed by the same organisation with the same client target group, and that includes women's refuges. In some cases, there is a change in the manager operating that property but, nonetheless, they are still operating as women's refuges.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But the tenders in most of these districts did not provide for women's only services. They provide a mixed case. For example, in the city where we have approximately 20 women's-only providers with properties, your tender for the city only had provision for two. This is what people just do not understand. One of your documents asks that the new providers, or the successful tenderers, who have now taken over these properties in the tender package they won, from 1 July become responsible for property management costs and pay market rent, is that correct?

Mr ALLEN: No, that is not correct.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Okay. This is one of—

Mr ALLEN: Let me clarify.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: One of your documents from FACS NSW says that from 1 July 2015 SHSs will become responsible for property management costs associated with the transitional housing they are managing as well as tenancy management. These costs are to be met through rent revenue.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that statement is correct. And that statement is correct for transitional properties and they are separate from what you would understand to be crisis properties or what are sometimes called refuges. They are separate properties. In refuges or crisis properties the people residing in those properties do not pay rent. That is an important part of the emergency service that is provided.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: That is right.

Mr ALLEN: So people are generally housed in those properties for up to three months.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: That is right.

Mr ALLEN: Transitional housing is quite different. It is still there for people usually who are exiting a crisis facility or a refuge and they are provided with that transitional accommodation generally for up to 18 months and they do pay rent in those properties and they are eligible for Commonwealth rental assistance.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Yes.

Mr ALLEN: It is only reasonable that the income from that property should also help provide funding for the costs of operating that property.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Can you categorise your 1,300 properties into different categories? How many are transitional properties, how many are refuges and how many are used for crisis accommodation purposes?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I will take that as a question on notice but again, sorry to be boring about this, a crisis property or refuge is the same thing. It is just a different word to describe the property.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No it is not. A women's refuge is different from a general service. A women's-only refuge deals with women only.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, as do youth refuges deal with youth.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Deal with youth; that is right.

Mr ALLEN: That is right. But they are still all crisis properties or refuges.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You have just said there is a difference. Could you provide the Committee with the number of properties in the 1,300 that have been used for women's refuges, youth refuges, men's refuges, transitional housing, refuges for Aboriginal woman and crisis accommodation?

Mr ALLEN: Yes. I will take that as a question on notice, but the base assumption you are coming from is that all of those things are going to change and that properties will be lost, and that is not true.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, no. I understand that 1,300 properties are in this management, is that right?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: And some of those properties will go with the successful tenderers. In answer to a question by Ms Jan Barham about management you said that one of the criteria—I am paraphrasing your answer, so please correct me if I am wrong—was tenderers who also came to you with properties. Why there is such distress in the community is that a number of larger providers that do not have local expertise have now been successful and have come on board with a property portfolio or property arm to now manage some of these properties, but may not manage them as women's refuges. They may manage them as general services. That is what we are trying to understand.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Perhaps I can help. If the information you give back to us gave us the number of beds that had been funded for crisis accommodation before the reforms and after, and the number of beds that were being provided for transition before and after, that gets you the detail.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I was going to get to that. My next question was to be in terms of a place we visited last week, the Shoalhaven Youth Accommodation refuge, which has nine crisis beds for young people. They have lost that. They have lost those nine crisis beds.

Mr ALLEN: Who is that?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Shoalhaven Youth Accommodation.

Mr ALLEN: Because they were not successful in the tender?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Well, I do not understand. What I understand is that nine crisis beds for young people have been lost in that area.

Mr ALLEN: If they are government-owned, that will not be the case, no.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You are saying that that is not right.

Mr ALLEN: I am saying that there has been no loss of government-owned crisis or transitional properties as part of this reform and tender process. I am happy to take it as a question on notice if you want specific details, but from recollection the service providers in the Shoalhaven area are for the youth package. I am sorry, Southern Youth and Family Services was successful in a couple of those packages. I know they got the Wollongong-Illawarra one and one in southern New South Wales, but I am not sure whether they got the Shoalhaven one.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: What you are saying is that the properties are still there, the beds are still there, and we have just changed providers. Why go through this whole process where people are distressed at a local level and where refuges will close? I have visited those and there are refuges that have already closed. Why go through this process? Is it based on population? Nobody understands what you are basing this process on.

Mr ALLEN: This process is based on a discussion paper that was issued in 2012 and then a reform paper that was issued in 2013. That is the basis and the objective of the reform, and it is set out in the reform paper from last year what the objectives of the reform were. It was very clear through that process that these services would be tendered out so that there would be a contestable process for the funding going forward.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Was the previous Minister, Minister Goward, involved in briefings regarding this process between 2012 and prior to her moving portfolios?

Mr ALLEN: Minister Goward was the Minister that released both the discussion paper and the reform paper, yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But did you brief her about these proposals?

Mr ALLEN: I think it is reasonable to assume that senior departmental staff are briefing Ministers on a range of issues and on new initiatives and directions, yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Yes, I understand. But as you can understand, at ground level people are very worried, angry and upset about what has happened to their local refuge or their local youth accommodation. For example, there is a specialist homelessness service in the inner city that houses young girls from the ages of 14 to 18 years. That building was purposely built. That building in that service now has moved to another provider. That is what has happened to a number of these services. The community does not understand why that has happened. If you are saying that the service will still continue, what—

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is correct. Why this has happened, I am sorry, is because of the reform paper in the reform directions that were determined. That was all announced in that reform paper in 2013. It was based on submissions based on consultation and based on a discussion paper from 2012. These were very public processes. In the inner city, as I am sure you will have noted, Minister Upton has restored funding for women's services—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: After a huge outcry.

Mr ALLEN: —as well as restored funding for other inner city services, and those—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, no, but not to the existing providers, Mr Allen.

Mr ALLEN: I am—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: That is to the new tenderers—to the successful tenderers. In the city there were only two packages for women-only services. Do you understand that the community wants to know: Where are these women going to go? Where is a woman, who has escaped 15 years of domestic violence and who is carrying two plastic shopping bags and her children, going to go? That is what people are asking us and we need those answers from you.

Mr ALLEN: The answer to the question—and you are incorrect in one of your assumptions that the Minister, Minister Upton, has approved the restoration of funding to women's services in the inner city and that is still subject to—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Which ones?

Mr ALLEN: That is still subject to negotiation with those services.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Okay. What about the country? What about the regions? What happens to places like Kempsey and like Taree?

Mr ALLEN: I am sorry. You are asking me a series of double-barrelled questions. I am trying to reasonably answer them in the order in which you have asked them.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Okay.

Mr ALLEN: First, the funding for women's services in the inner city has been restored. That is the subject of negotiations with a number of providers—both those that were successful and some that were unsuccessful but are still providing services in the inner city. That is one thing. In other locations, all of the districts have had their funding levels increased, so no district across New South Wales has had their funding reduced. That is a very important point.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But you are talking district, not provider of a service.

Mr ALLEN: And the service packages that apply in those districts will still fund homelessness services in a variety of places, including women's refuges. There are a number of women's refuge providers who have been successful in the tender process, indeed as both single services and also at least some women's refuges that are leading joint working arrangements whereby they are partnering but they are the lead partner with a number of other organisations.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But they are still closing. I am sorry. There are women's refuges that are closing.

Mr ALLEN: I am sorry but—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: The Killara Womens Refuge in Randwick; that is closed.

Mr ALLEN: The Killara Womens Refuge at Randwick has not closed. It has had a change of provider. It will still be operated as a women's refuge and it will be operated by the current operator who has taken over from Killara, and that is St Vincent de Paul.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But this is the issue. There is a change of provider but the service still remains the same—

Mr ALLEN: That is correct.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: —even though the tender package does not ask for that, for women's-only.

Mr ALLEN: There is an inner-city, women's-only tender package and women are key client target groups in a number of other packages, which still require the delivery of a specialised service, and in that case a women's-only service.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I suggest that you go down and meet with these community members and managers at the local level and find out.

Mr ALLEN: I am meeting with a number of them at a local level.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: They are not very happy.

Mr ALLEN: I am very clear and they also understand that a cross-client target group does not mean that you cannot have specialised services within that cross-client target group, and women particularly are a key client target group within many of those cross-client packages. It does not mean it is a generic or a generalised service and it certainly does not mean that men will be living in the same crisis facilities as women.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But, Mr Allen, you have got to understand that many of these refuges were purposely set up by their local communities—independently set up—for the purpose of dealing with women escaping domestic violence. They were set up for women, run by women, with the support of government agencies and the collaboration of other providers in the local area, but they were set up specifically for women. Now they are part of a generalist mix. This is what people do not understand.

Mr ALLEN: We have been very clear that a cross-client target group does not mean a generalised service.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: What does "cross-client" mean? What does that mean?

Mr ALLEN: It means there is a range of client groups that have got to be assisted within that package, and where it is appropriate and necessary for those clients to have a specialised service—such as women and children escaping domestic violence—then a specialised service has to be delivered. In many of the tender packages, there are what are called joint working arrangements. That is a consortia of organisations that can be led, for example, by women's refuge but might also have other service providers or other organisations delivering specialised services to young people or specialised services to Aboriginal people, but it is all part of a cross-client target package. In other cases there are specific packages that only focus on women, or on youth, or on Aboriginal people. That is part of having a diverse and integrated service mix. It does not mean it is a generalised or generic service, and it does not mean that there is not specialisation within those service packages.

CHAIR: We understand all those transfers that you are mentioning—that it is only a change to who is in charge of the new service.

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

CHAIR: But one of the issues in the regions, especially down our way in the Shoalhaven, is that there is not a huge pool of people with the expertise to operate women's services, or with the history of 30 or 40 years of looking after these women. What has been put in place to ensure that we have a knowledge transfer and a history transfer to continue delivering the highest level of service that normally has been given and to avoid its being totally compromised? What are you doing to protect that?

Mr ALLEN: There are a number of ways that are being taken account of. First, in the tender process, tenderers in their proposals had to demonstrate that they could satisfactorily deliver services in that location of the type that they would tendering for, whether that was for youth services, womens-only services or other services in that location. They had to be able to demonstrate that they have the capabilities to be able to do that in that particular location. Part of what we require of those organisations is that they make sure that they are publicising the service that is available and that they are making sure that, in their engagement with that community, they are engaging with all of the stakeholders and the necessary organisations that we would want and expect them to be working very closely with in that location. Many of the organisations have a long history of delivering services. I know there has been some contention about Elsie's women's refuge at Glebe, for example. That is now being operated by the St Vincent de Paul but they have more than 38 years experience in operating womens-only services. The services operated by them but operated and managed by women, so those services can still be provided.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Where?

CHAIR: You can ask that question, but I want to ask another question to deal with this. What are you doing to evaluate that that is happening the way you are thinking it is happening and that the services are not providing a substandard level of service? There is always a shift when you hand something over. There is always the old J-curve potentially happening. Are they being compromised in the transition? How are you evaluating that that service is not going from good to worse? How are you going to evaluate that it is going from better to best?

Mr ALLEN: Okay. First, there are a set of contractual arrangements that are being put in place with each of the successful providers. That goes down to a great deal of detail into the way that they will be delivering services in that location. They will need to report on a variety of client statistics in the operation of that contract. We will be monitoring those very closely. They are fairly detailed requirements. There is also a formal evaluation process that we are putting in place across all of the tenders as well and that will continue over the course of the three years of the contract. But the performance of each and every organisation will be monitored very closely by our district staff.

Ms JAN BARHAM: You have referred to the contracts and the evaluation indicators or performance measures.

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Is it possible to see what they are in terms of having a blank document?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I am happy to take that as a question on notice and give you those key performance details. I am happy to take on notice and give you a more detailed explanation of the proposed evaluation process that we are putting in place across the three years of this contract.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Thank you.

Mr ALLEN: If I may briefly answer another question that you asked earlier that I did not get to in my answer. You asked about whether consumer price index [CPI] will apply to these contracts each year. Yes, it will. The equal remuneration order will also be applied to these contracts over each year of the three-year contract.

Ms JAN BARHAM: That is additional to the amount—

Mr ALLEN: That is correct.

Ms JAN BARHAM: I am interested in where the processes sit now after we have completed the Homelessness Action Plan 2009-2014, whether we have an evaluation of that, whether that has morphed into this new process and the regional plans, and how that is reframed into the new process, whether we have a new regional and State Homelessness Action Plan based on this new model, or have these documents and all their measures and actions and indicators fallen by the wayside?

Mr ALLEN: No, not in the slightest.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Where do they sit?

Mr ALLEN: First, there has been a detailed evaluation of the Homelessness Action Plan and the related projects, and that was done in partnership with AHURI, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. That information and that evaluation have been made publicly available, I believe, on our website. I am fairly clear about that but I will take it as a question on notice and provide it to you in any case. That has helped to inform these reforms, but it will also help to inform further work in future years on homelessness, as will the evaluation of these specific programs, the Specialist Homelessness Services program. The Government is currently considering its position on a future Homelessness Action Plan and I cannot comment on that further at this point in time, but the Government, through our Minister, is actively considering that particular issue.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Thank you. I take you back to the point about the discussion paper and the submissions that were received in the development of this. Can you clarify its public availability? It does not appear to be on your website and it is not referred to in the announcement that was made by the Minister about this new process. You have said it was an open and public process and submissions were called. I am not sure, perhaps I missed it in all of the other discussion papers, but from what the Minister has said in her foreword, it appears that it was not a public process, it was a service providers process. She stated, "When I announced the Going Home Staying Home reform in July 2012, I invited the sector to provide feedback on our reform direction and to partner with us in the reform process." You have said a number of times "discussion paper" and have referred to 70 submissions.

Mr ALLEN: That is correct, so the 2012 paper was the discussion paper. The Minister invited public comment on that. That was the 70-odd submissions that were made in response to that discussion paper and that discussion paper was developed in consultation with a range of sector representatives. Then there was the final reform plan that was issued last year by then Minister Goward. Both of those documents have been publicly available on our website for the entire time.

Ms JAN BARHAM: I do not think either of them—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Are the submissions on the website?

Mr ALLEN: I am not clear about the submissions, but certainly I am clear that both documents were on our web site. We will take an action to double-check.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Will those submissions be made public?

Mr ALLEN: I will take that as a question on notice. I will have to check. It depends on what commitments were made to the people making those submissions as to whether we were clear that they would be made public or whether they required them to be kept confidential. I do not know off the top of my head.

Ms JAN BARHAM: If they were to be confidential, normally we would expect to see a document that analyses the submissions.

Mr ALLEN: Sure.

Ms JAN BARHAM: I have two specific issues that have been raised in the North Coast community. One is on the north coast—now called the Northern District. Concerns have been raised whether the Lismore Women and Children's Refuge will remain open. Can you clarify that? The other is a service in Kempsey, YP Space, a youth facility. Despite the issue about your clarification that the qualifying organisations had to identify that they had experience in delivering services in that area, my understanding is that the organisation that won that tender has not operated a youth crisis service in that area. Could you clarify that?

Mr ALLEN: There are a couple of questions there. In terms of the Lismore refuge, that is not one that is fully government owned; it is part owned by an organisation called Northern Rivers Women and Children's Services Inc. [NORWACS], and part owned by the Land and Housing Corporation. It was not included in the tender because of the part ownership. The successful tenderer in Lismore is another local organisation called On Track.

Ms JAN BARHAM: They are not local; they are from Queensland.

Mr ALLEN: They operate in northern New South Wales and they have operated in northern New South Wales for a number of years. We have worked with them over a number of years, so I am certain of that fact. They are also registered as a community housing provider in New South Wales. Our district staff and On Track, the successful tenderer, are in discussions with NORWACS, the operator of that particular refuge, to negotiate what future arrangements might be put in place. I am not aware of where those negotiations are up to specifically so I cannot comment on that further. Certainly I have spoken directly with our district staff about those negotiations and other staff from my senior team have spoken with representatives from On Track so we know those discussions and negotiations are taking place.

In terms of the general issue, organisations had to pre-qualify for the tender to be able to lodge a tender. There were three categories, if you like, of organisations that pre-qualified. There were those that were existing Specialist Homelessness Services [SHS] providers. There were those providers that were funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness [NPAH]. There were other providers that were able to demonstrate that they were delivering homelessness services now that were not funded by either of the other two programs. They were the three criteria, among others, they had to pass to pre-qualify.

The tender assessment process took into account an organisation's history and capability to be able to deliver homelessness services and the services specific to that tender package. It did not necessarily mean that they needed to be working already in that specific location, but they needed to be able to demonstrate through the tender process that they could deliver those services into the future in that location. I understand there is an issue that our district is currently discussing with YP Space about the location of a 24/7 youth refuge. The current refuge is in Port Macquarie. The youth refuge in Kempsey has not operated as a 24/7 service, as I understand it, but there is a view that the 24/7 refuge service would be better placed in Kempsey not Port Macquarie. That is what is being discussed at a district level with providers at the moment.

Ms JAN BARHAM: To follow up on a point that you have now raised, there is an issue where negotiation is now going on and perhaps that should come up in the process of service package provision by district. Is there some flexibility in recognising that the November 2013 packages may not have captured everything that is needed? Is it fair to say that there is flexibility from the Government to be made aware of some rejigging of the packages?

Mr ALLEN: My answer to your question is probably going to sound a bit equivocal, but the organisations that have successfully tendered have got to deliver the package that they tendered for. There is some flexibility around a number of small elements, yes, and those things can and are being negotiated at this point in time.

Ms JAN BARHAM: That is a positive outcome if there is flexibility.

Mr ALLEN: There always has to be some level of flexibility in these processes but it has to be in the context and maintain the integrity of the tender.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Have you been able to assess what the impact might be with a delay in the continuation of the [NPAH] funding and how that will roll out?

Mr ALLEN: We have extended all organisations' funding through to 31 July and we have guaranteed—

Ms JAN BARHAM: All of the ones that are currently NPAH funded?

Mr ALLEN: All of the ones that are currently NPAH funded or Specialist Homelessness Services [SHS] funded are funded through to 31 July. We have guaranteed unsuccessful providers that they will have at least 60 per cent of their current funding provided for the next three months, so from 1 August to 30 October, and where they apply for the service support fund, they are able to potentially get up to 100 per cent of their current level of funding for that period and potentially up to an 18-month period.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Am I right that that is only if they do not have any other packages? Do you see what I mean?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I see your point. Everybody gets funded until 31 July. Everybody gets guaranteed at least 60 per cent of their funding until 30 October.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Is that everybody?

Mr ALLEN: Everybody.

Ms NASSER: Yes.

Mr ALLEN: Yes. I am just making sure. That is everybody. Over and above that, unsuccessful tenderers who were eligible for the service support fund are able to apply for 100 per cent of their current funding for up to 18 months. I went through the eligibility before for the service support fund. It is for small- to medium-sized organisations that provide homelessness services as the principal business of their organisation and for which SHS was the principal source of their funding.

Ms JAN BARHAM: But they are not eligible if they gained funding for other services?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct. If they have been successful somewhere in the tender then they are not eligible for that. I also wanted to make the point that large organisations are not eligible for the service support fund because we generally consider that they would have access to a wider range of resources and be able to cater for themselves. Likewise, organisations for which homelessness was a very small part of their business and there is a much larger part of their business that delivers other services. One example I can think of could be disability services where an organisation only does a very small amount of homelessness work. They are not eligible for service support funding either. But it still means that the vast majority of unsuccessful tenderers are eligible for service support funding.

CHAIR: You talked about the unaccompanied minors tenders. Was that \$9 million over two or three years?

Mr ALLEN: Over three years.

CHAIR: It is \$9 million every year?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct. It is \$27 million in total.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: I am sure you will have to take this question on notice. Could you provide details of any service providers that have either permanently or temporarily had their authority to allocate public housing to tenants rescinded for, say, the past five years?

Mr ALLEN: We will take that question on notice. I think we should be able to reasonably answer that question.

Ms JAN BARHAM: In the service package assessment process did you consider services that are provided by community organisations and volunteers such as homeless breakfasts at service centres that do not actually provide housing? I have referred in the House a number of times to a service in Byron Bay that is a meeting place where homeless people and services attend. Rather than homeless people having to go and find services the services come to them and they have access to lockers, food, washing machines, showers and things like that. Were those sorts of services, or soup kitchens, taken into account?

Mr ALLEN: I cannot recall a service package that would have had that as part of the service requirement to be delivered but certainly where organisations in their tender proposals were able to say, "We do all of these other things"—as I mentioned, we encourage providers to include in their proposals where they made other contributions that were either financial or non-financial. If they were able to provide a range of other non-financial services however that might be described, that was certainly evaluated as part of the tender proposals.

Ms JAN BARHAM: I am wondering whether there is any mechanism or funding arrangement to support some of the organisations that provide services that obviously assist with some of the more regulated services that are provided. I think the pressure might be on them in the future as we see changes in the Federal budget, the current state of the economy or loss of employment opportunities. Is there any way that will be factored in? I know that on the mid North Coast and North Coast those services are pressured at the moment. They are fearful that when we get the numbers from the census next time round we will see that despite all the effort there is an increase because of an overarching societal issue rather than a lack of performance. It is just that this is an ongoing and increasing problem and I think it is worldwide.

Mr ALLEN: One of the reasons we specifically put our district structure in place—and, as I mentioned, there are 15 of those across the State—was to make sure that our department through those local staff had a stronger connection to local communities. I expect those sorts of things would be discussed by the district and by both the homeless service providers and other service providers in the district. They will discuss how well the service network is operating in that district more broadly over the whole life of the three years of these contracts.

That was a fundamental reason for putting what we call "localisation", that district level structure, in place. That replaced what were our previous regional structures. In Housing we had four, in Community Services there were seven and in Ageing, Disability and Home Care there were six. All of those were integrated into the 15 local districts. There is a district director responsible for each district and they are responsible for all of the services that Family and Community Services [FACS] provides in that district. Each of them is required to make sure that they have strong community and stakeholder engagement as a fundamental part of the way that they do business in their districts.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You are saying that you have gone from regional to district to local, but the locals are telling us that they had very little involvement in the consultation.

Mr ALLEN: The consultation on these reforms commenced about two-odd years ago. Our district structure was only put in place in September last year but certainly there was consultation across all government departments and we were one department at that stage. I cannot remember when we became FACS from Human Services. No, we were FACS in 2012 so that consultation did take place with staff at the local level. I cannot say that every single staff member was consulted but certainly there were consultations and discussions at every local level and the papers were public.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Are you saying that you did talk to the local refuges and the local women's refuges? Did you take into consideration the local knowledge, information, outcomes and information about the clients that they were seeing? Was all of that taken into consideration?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, because all of the service packages were developed in each of the districts and they were better placed than anyone sitting centrally in the department to develop those packages because they live and work in those districts.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You can confirm to the Committee that the district FACS officers did speak to the existing specialist providers, including the refugees, about these proposed changes?

Mr ALLEN: I cannot confirm what took place across 15 districts in every single case but certainly what I am saying is that the packages were developed by our local districts and they would have held discussions with a variety of people as part of that process.

Ms JAN BARHAM: They had their homelessness committees, you mean.

Mr ALLEN: There were homelessness committees in place before then.

Ms JAN BARHAM: What is not clear is how often they met, what they discussed, whether their minutes are available or how engaged they were. Out of a committee of 17 members four were from non-government organisations. What is not clear is what the role of those members was, what the discussions were, how many meetings were had, how engaged they were and what the outcomes were. As I raised earlier, you have all these government departments but we do not know their commitment to homelessness.

What is the commitment of NSW Health? In my area a nurse goes to a homeless breakfast and provides a couple of hours of service, which saves the system a lot of money. There are people with cuts that if they were not dressed and looked after at that point could end up infected and someone would be in emergency or in hospital with an infection. As I understand it, the allocation of funding for a service like that is being withdrawn. What value was this interagency committee if there is not an interagency plan and there is not a commitment across the whole of government for homelessness? It puts in doubt what input four out of 17 non-government organisations were able to have in the development of this new plan.

Mr ALLEN: First, I cannot comment on that specific example or circumstance because I am not familiar with that. But certainly we work very closely with our colleagues in the Department of Health. Indeed, the boundaries for our local FACS districts mirror those boundaries of the local health districts for that very reason, because we want a strong and joined up and more integrated service system. Health are providers and funders of a range of services for homeless people, particularly through their mental health services and their drug and alcohol services. We as government agencies all participate in a homelessness interagency committee at a State level and a variety of government departments are represented in that process. We have a number of—

Ms JAN BARHAM: Do you mean the Premier's Council or another one?

Mr ALLEN: This is a government offices one. It is a homelessness interagency committee. It is all the different government departments who have a role in homelessness, so it is ourselves and our Health and Community Services colleagues and people from Legal Aid that provide services to homeless people.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Does that have an outcome or something tangible?

Mr ALLEN: It meets on a regular basis to ensure that there is consultation across departments but also input and integration and coordination across departments. It is more than just a meeting of like-minded cooperative people. It is about making sure that those actions and activities that departments are taking in relation to homelessness are joined up because we are not the only funder or provider of homelessness services. If I can make two other points: First, thanks to our kind staff here I can confirm that the Going Home Staying Home Reform Plan, the Future Directions consultation discussion paper and the Homelessness Action Plan evaluations are all on our FACS website. All three of those are on the FACS website.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Including the submissions?

Mr ALLEN: I have not been able to confirm the submissions yet. I have taken that as a question on notice because that requires more detailed checking.

Ms JAN BARHAM: The reform plan is a plan?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct, preceded by a discussion paper that was consulted on.

Ms JAN BARHAM: What was the discussion paper called?

Mr ALLEN: It was called Future Directions.

Ms JAN BARHAM: And it called for public submissions?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct. That was the July 2012 paper.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Is that the 70 submissions?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct. The 70 submissions were based on that paper.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You made that available to the public?

Mr ALLEN: That is right. It has been on the website, as I understand. It was entitled "Future directions for specialist homelessness services".

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You will advise the Committee if those submissions will be made public?

Mr ALLEN: Yes. I have taken that as a question on notice and I will come back to you about that. If I can answer more specifically because I think I understand the point you were making earlier about the service packages: Certainly our districts did consult on what they proposed to put into the service packages. That included the balance between homelessness and at-risk clients, the client distribution between different client groups, the distribution of clients across case mix including low, medium and high, the number of Indigenous clients as well as any potential specialist homelessness service gaps. That consultation took place before the service packages were then designed by each of the districts but it was part of that process. What I am saying is they did not go out to say, "Here is our service package, we want to consult on it." They consulted on the range of things that should have been included in the service package and then they went away and designed that.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Was this in September?

Mr ALLEN: This process would have started last year before we went to tender. It was around September.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: How was the consultation with women's refuges managed?

Mr ALLEN: It would have been dealt with in each district. As part of the consultation process they would have talked to homelessness service providers in their district. Whether every person and organisation was consulted, I cannot be clear. Certainly our districts consulted broadly as part of the process of then developing these service packages.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Can those 15 districts provide you and then the Committee with a list of who they consulted at the local women's refuges?

Mr ALLEN: I will take that as a question on notice. However, I do not know that detailed records were kept on every organisation or person consulted as part of that process.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: If the 15 districts organised a consultation process, from what you are telling me they would have consulted with the local refuges.

Mr ALLEN: Yes. They would have consulted and I will provide as much information as we reasonably can about those consultations and who participated. I am not entirely clear that detailed attendance records would have been kept for every consultation or discussion.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: A couple of providers have been asked to retender. Why?

Mr ALLEN: There are six service packages that will be subject to what we call secondary procurement. That means another process, which might be going back to tender or further negotiations with the organisations that have already tendered. We did not get a successful tender outcome so we go back and look at how we might be able to finalise it. There are three Aboriginal-specific packages in the Hunter, a multicultural package for western and south western Sydney, and two packages for western New South Wales.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: As you can understand, many women from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal communities are not only feeling uncertainty but also are very distressed. We are concerned that women may be falling through the net because of this uncertainty.

Mr ALLEN: Let me be absolutely clear—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: We urge you to do everything you can.

Mr ALLEN: We certainly are. All of the current providers will continue to be funded at 100 per cent until we are able to conclude whatever that secondary procurement process might be. For example, if we go back to another tender then all the organisations subject to it will continue to be funded until we get a tender outcome.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Many providers are concerned about the prequalification stages. Correct me if I am wrong, but the applications for prequalification were opened between 23 September and 18 October, and then the tender process started. A number of services were told they had prequalified but they were unsuccessful. Their prequalification was assessed as only partially meeting the service footprint when the service clearly had an established presence in an area. There were no identified appeal or complaint mechanisms or clear indication of how to get feedback, and complaints to FACS received no response. That was at the prequalification stage. A number of services were told they had prequalified but when the tenders came out they were told they could not tender because they had to change their service model.

Mr ALLEN: First, very few organisations did not prequalify. Of those that applied for prequalification there were some that failed specifically on governance and financial grounds.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Do you have a number? How many prequalified?

Mr ALLEN: I understand that 190 organisations prequalified.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: How many of those were not successful?

Mr ALLEN: I will take that question on notice. The other point I want to make is that of the organisations that applied for prequalification only six did not proceed. Three current SHS organisations did not apply for prequalification. Three others that I mentioned did apply but they did not meet the prequalification requirements.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Were there service providers, particularly those running women's refuges, who prequalified for tendering but were not allowed to continue to run their facility for women escaping domestic violence?

Mr ALLEN: The prequalification was a general entry into the opportunity to tender. Those opportunities were not offered to every organisation across the State; they were offered to organisations that we reasonably formed a view were valid tenderers for particular service packages.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You mentioned Erin's Place, which is a major concern. It was established under a former Liberal Government. I understand that it was successful in prequalification.

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that they were not allowed to continue to run their facility as a refuge for women escaping domestic violence. They and others were invited to apply for generalist packages including women and men.

Mr ALLEN: It is a cross-client package.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Some of these refuges have always been for women only, so they did not then apply.

Mr ALLEN: This is not a comment specifically about Erin's Place because I do not have enough detail. In some cases there were, for example, women-only services where the new service package was a cross-client package. Yes, women are still part of that and a specialised service will be provided. However, they took the view that they did not want to lead a process that focused on a cross-client service package; they wanted to provide services only to women. In those cases, we encouraged those organisations to partner with other organisations that might be either more interested in or better placed to tender for that particular package as a lead organisation with a number of partners or subcontractors as part of that process, and that has happened.

There are women-only services or refuges that are part of a joint working arrangement—a consortium—with a lead partner. They are a partner in that service package and they provide specific women's services in a cross-client package and other organisations, including the lead, provide the other services. You get a variety of case mixes provided by specialised organisations as a consortium. That is what I mean by an integrated service. I understand that there are 10 specialist women's services that are lead organisations in a cross-client targeted service package. They have been successful and they are leading. Others took the view that they did not want to do that. In that case the option was to partner with someone who was interested in and able to lead that particular consortium.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Unfortunately the tender packages for those areas did not allow for those providers to tender for women-only specialisation because the packages have changed.

Mr ALLEN: I understand the point you are making.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: This is the community speaking.

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Will it still be a 24-hour refuge taking women at any time? Will it have the same staff allocation and will it be open for the same hours? I am referring to those refuges that have not been successful that have been transferred to the larger providers. Will the hours and staffing arrangements stay the same?

Mr ALLEN: I can provide only a general answer, and it is generally yes. As you know, not all refuges provide 24/7 services. I cannot be more specific other than to say that generally the same service arrangements will be in place.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Will those that offered refuge 24 hours a day still provide that service?

Mr ALLEN: Generally, yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Do you have a list? Are they part of your contract negotiations?

Mr ALLEN: That is part of the contract negotiation process so I cannot provide that list at this time.

In terms of the submissions on the discussion paper, there is a summary on our website of the feedback that was received in those written submissions and in the consultation forums. There is also a list of the 75 bodies that made written submissions as part of that process. There is summary-level information both from the written submissions and the consultation forums and also a list of the 75 bodies that made written submissions. That is on the website and has been there for a long time.

Ms JAN BARHAM: But it is hard to find.

Mr ALLEN: I am not an expert at navigating websites.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: The 75 submission are on the website?

Mr ALLEN: The names of the people or organisations that made submissions are on the website. Those submissions and the public consultation forums have been summarised and that feedback is on the website and has been for a long time.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Can we get access to the individual submissions?

Mr ALLEN: I have that as a question on notice.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Many people have expressed concern about the title "Going Home Staying Home". What are the objectives of this program?

Mr ALLEN: The objectives are articulated in detail in the reform plan. I will not go over that in detail. We had some feedback, but, in fairness, a limited number of people have expressed concern about the title Going Home Staying Home.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: You should read the emails I am receiving.

Mr ALLEN: I understand that some women have stated that for a victim of domestic violence going home is not appropriate. We agree it is not appropriate and the title of the reform is not meant to say or imply that women are expected to go home to a place of violence. That is what the reform is about: ensuring that women and children who experience domestic and family violence have somewhere else to go. However, that kind of language is used in other programs. The Staying Home Leaving Violence program looks to relocate the perpetrator. Nothing is meant by "Going Home Staying Home" other than that people should have a home to go to and it should not be a place where they are subjected to violence.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: That is their concern. That is the concern that has been raised with me by the clients of those refuges where they are saying that the title of Going Home, Staying Home is offensive. That is what they are saying to me, so I am letting you know.

Mr ALLEN: Okay. That is fine. That is just a broad title for these reforms. The program is the Specialist Homelessness Services program. That is the program name. This is just a broad descriptor. In terms of domestic violence, there is more funding and there are more domestic violence services. The Start Safely program at \$10 million a year over three years is a program that is focussed on providing assistance to women and children escaping domestic violence. It is a very formal, fundamental and important part of our homelessness work.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Are the objectives to move people through the system? What is the objective? My concern is that domestic violence has increased, sexual assault has increased, and survivors of sexual abuse dealing with their trauma and issues has increased. Fundamentally, what are you trying to do?

Mr ALLEN: The reforms are predicated on the sad reality that there was a 27 per cent increase in the number of homeless people between the 2006 and 2011 census periods in New South Wales. That is why these reforms are being put in place. The reforms have three principle objectives: first—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Sorry, I keep hearing this issue. The former Howard Government defunded a lot of programs, including a lot of State housing programs. That is why there has been an increase in homelessness and also the underinvestment in housing supply. People keep asking what you are trying to achieve from this. As I said, domestic violence is increasing, women escaping domestic violence have nowhere to go because their local refuge is closing. What do you say to those women?

Mr ALLEN: The first part of your question was a statement, not a question. The other parts that I can reasonably answer, in fairness, are first the three overarching objectives of this reform are very clearly to rehouse people as quickly as possible who become homeless, to break the cycle of homelessness for those people who are continuing in the homelessness situation and, thirdly, to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place. So stop it happening in the first place, fix it fast when it does happen and for those who are homeless and have been cycling through homelessness break that cycle of disadvantage. Those are the three overarching objectives. There are a number of other objectives within that that are set out in the reform plan. First, what I keep saying—and I will keep saying it because it is the truth—is that no government owned crisis, refuge or transitional property is closing. There might be changes of management in some cases, not in all cases, but those services are not closing. They are simply being provided by another provider.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I think the Government is missing the point. Yes, everyone supports early intervention and prevention of homelessness, but it takes a whole collaborative, coordinated approach to ensure that there is enough housing supply and that is a major issue. But if we go back in terms of what you are talking about is rapidly rehousing people and trying to prevent the risk of homelessness—

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: —which we are all in the same boat in this. But many people do not know what you will do to help a family if they lose their job tomorrow and they are stretched, their mortgage is stretched. Poverty and homelessness and domestic violence all happen; they can happen instantaneously through work injury or through losing their work.

Mr ALLEN: Absolutely. I absolutely understand what you are saying and I absolutely agree.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Then they are in crisis.

Mr ALLEN: Because there is a very fine line for all of us between being housed and becoming homeless and something like a work injury can very much cascade someone into homelessness. You need to have a look at the totality of this reform and all of the initiatives that are involved in the reform. This is not just about these tenders. Yes, that is a very big part of it, but there is also the other two programs, the initiatives I have mentioned, Start Safely and Unaccompanied Minors, but what also gets a bit lost in the process is that we have now instituted a single telephone line called Link2Home. It is operated out of the department's housing contact centre at Liverpool and it operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That replaces what were three previous telephone lines. Hpick operated by the city of Sydney and jointly funded with us, a phone line operated by Y Foundations, and an after-hours temporary accommodation phone line that we operated. None of those lines was open after 10.00 p.m.; one of them closed at 5.00 p.m. and one of them closed at lunch time.

Now there is one number, the Link2Home number, that is available statewide on a 24/7 basis. The other important initiative that we are putting in place as part of that process, to support service providers and get better outcomes for homeless people, is a client information management system. That has not existed previously. Link2Home started last week, and the client information management system started last week and it is on a phased implementation path. The first phase is to collect and record vacancy information for all of the homelessness services across New South Wales, all the SHS services. That is now providing real-time information to services and to the Link2Home phone line on where the vacancies are in the system across New South Wales. It is a daily basis. A large number of organisations have started updating their information. Previous to that, if you wanted to find out—

Ms JAN BARHAM: Mr Allen, I think we all get the drift of that one.

Mr ALLEN: The important point I want to finish is that before the client information management system was put in place, if you wanted to know where the vacancies were you would have to make 300 phone calls across New South Wales.

Ms JAN BARHAM: No, most people would go to their local office because if they are on the North Coast they do not need to know that something is available on the South Coast. They want to know what is local because they have to get somewhere quick and they do not have transport. The homeless action plan identified that it would deliver 6,500 new social housing dwellings by 2012. Did that target get met?

Mr ALLEN: That was the nation building and economic stimulus TAN, 6,000 properties.

Ms JAN BARHAM: No, it is New South Wales—

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, 2009 to 2014, the NSW Action plan.

Mr ALLEN: Sorry, I cannot remember that detail. What did it say—6,500?

Ms JAN BARHAM: New social housing dwellings will be built in New South Wales by 2012.

Mr ALLEN: That is correct. That was the nation building and economic stimulus plan. That was 6,500 properties and they were built in New South Wales.

Ms JAN BARHAM: They all got built?

Mr ALLEN: Yes they did.

Ms JAN BARHAM: How many of those are available—

Mr ALLEN: In fact, more of them got built.

Ms JAN BARHAM: How many of those are available for homeless specific people transitioning?

Mr ALLEN: Many of those properties were allocated to people who were either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Sorry, these are the social housing properties.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is correct. That is what I am talking about.

Ms JAN BARHAM: I just wanted that clarified.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: They are community providers.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, that is correct, but they are still social housing properties. They were allocated to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Ms JAN BARHAM: It is highly important that we have been talking about the women's refuges and domestic violence. In terms of young people, I mentioned the mid North Coast situation. I understand there is also the Foyer model on the South Coast that hopefully will be able to be retained under the new MPA funding. I think the jetty bunker at Coffs Harbour has been put in the cooler and they are concerned about that. I understand that Warringah Council has made a submission. We received some substantial information. Can you give any indication of why there is such a high degree of concern about what is going on if the confidence of the Government is that this is all being done in an open and transparent way and everyone has been consulted? Why is there such a high level of concern and uncertainty about a process? While I see that 75 organisations made submissions, without an assessment report, without making submissions available—

Mr ALLEN: There was a summary level report.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Just because submissions were made does not mean they were taken into account or regarded successfully or highly in the way they were interpreted into a new process.

Mr ALLEN: I think you can reasonably look at the feedback summary report that was provided and is on the website that reflected those submissions and the other consultation forums and certainly that feedback was absolutely incorporated—

Ms JAN BARHAM: But that is interpretation of feedback; it is not direct.

Mr ALLEN: But it was incorporated into the reform plan. I guess it is up to the individual who made those submissions as to whether they felt that whatever was incorporated was sufficient. If I can go back and answer your earlier question, any change process can be exceedingly unsettling, and we very much understand that this is an unsettling time for a number of organisations. But there is also a lot of misinformation. The Warringah example that you talk about, the Warringah refuge that is operated by the Manly-Warringah Resource Service has been successful and is being funded.

So I am not sure what the concern is there. Importantly, in going back to the issue of domestic violence, there is also the new domestic violence housing company that has been established in consultation with Domestic Violence NSW. There is also the youth housing company that has been established in consultation with Y Foundations and other stakeholders, and that has led to the availability of something like an additional 75 properties that were jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government and the New South Wales Government.

Ms JAN BARHAM: There are more things being revealed all the time. Perhaps it needs a mud map, something that says on one page "make it all simpler". This is the whole thing. A matrix or something that puts everything on one page because the complexity and diversity of all of this is a little overwhelming when some of us have devoted a lot of time to looking at this issue. For community or individual operators I think it has just

been an overwhelming process, particularly if they feel disadvantaged. It could do with some sort of diagrammatic thing that says join the dots, this is how it works. I think it would be good for everyone.

Mr ALLEN: I am happy to do that. Importantly, there have been, from the beginning of the processes, hot lines or feedback lines for organisations to flag issues with us or raise issues or concerns with us. We have also made them aware where there are any appeal processes if they feel aggrieved for some reason that they can access. So even the organisations that we wrote to, which we believed were not eligible for the service support fund, we have also made them aware that there is an appeal process or an internal review process if they want to appeal that. So we have tried to make sure that natural justice applies in the process the whole way through.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Can I add to that as well? Just speaking to a lot of people, attending a lot of meetings, and having discussions with people across the State, the concern is this sort of consolidation process—the bigger is better and one-size-fits-all process. There is a concern about this consolidation of services and then you provide a one-size-fits-all model.

Mr ALLEN: There are two things I would say in response to that. First, it is not consolidation and we do not have a view particularly that bigger is better.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But you have certainly gone down that path.

Mr ALLEN: Well, what we have gone down the path of is the path of better service integration. That does not mean one big organisation. As I have mentioned, there are 81 joint working arrangements where organisations have formed consortia; it is not one big organisation, it is a series of organisations in partnership, delivering service for that service package. There are 81 of those and there are 62 service packages that are being delivered by an individual organisation. So there is a mix, right across the system.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: But they have to share the funding and they have to share funding according to that tender package and the contract.

Mr ALLEN: That is correct.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: So they do not have the flexibility, at a local level, to make necessary changes for their particular client needs.

Mr ALLEN: We reasonably believe that they do because there has been no reduction in funding. In fact, there has been an increase in funding.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: That is not what has been said to us at a local level. But again, the other concern people have is, why did you move to this model? If you believe that women's refuges are not providing the outcomes that you have stated here today, have you stated that to them, to the women's refuges, to these specialist services?

Mr ALLEN: First, I did not decide these reforms; they were decided by the New South Wales Government. Yes, I have played a role in that process and we certainly have been very clear. The reform plan is publicly available and sets out very clearly what the purpose and direction of the reform is and we have certainly talked with a whole range of organisations. Indeed, the two key groups that we formed to help advise us and guide us in this process—the sector reference group was made up of all the peak organisations and some women, and it was a majority of women, probably two thirds women—many have worked in women's refuges before and were providers of homelessness services, as well as being peak organisations.

Domestic Violence NSW [DV NSW] has been part of our sector reference group, as has Homelessness NSW and Yfoundations, as well as others. We have also had a panel of experts: people who have worked in the system, eminent academics who have researched on homelessness, people like Professor Eileen Baldry, and there have been aboriginal people like the chairperson of the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office that have been on the panel of experts. We have been engaged with a whole range of people in developing these reforms.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: I understand that but, on the ground, they are telling us very different information to what you are presenting here today. And so, on the ground, there is concern that, particularly for women who are indigenous or women from a non-English-speaking background, that there are cultural

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sensitivities where these women will not go to services, refuges or crisis accommodation that are generalist, that there is real concern at a local level.

Mr ALLEN: Yes and we have addressed that in the service packages. Approximately 80 per cent of the service packages have aboriginal people as a key client group. There are some aboriginal-specific service packages for women. The contractual arrangements with these organisations require them to deliver culturally appropriate services, to ensure that there is engagement with appropriate cultural networks in their service area and to encourage the employment and retention of aboriginal staff in their service. That is a contractual commitment.

Ms JAN BARHAM: Have you defined what "culturally appropriate" is or a service level that is required? Because I do not think even the Government has a requirement upon itself for culturally appropriate or cultural awareness training for all staff, does it?

Mr ALLEN: It is something uppermost in the minds of Government departments.

Ms JAN BARHAM: But does it happen and is it a contractual requirement? Have you set the standard for what culturally appropriate training is?

Mr ALLEN: I will take that as a question on notice but I can be very clear with you that that requirement is a contractual requirement.

CHAIR: Thank you for your marathon effort here today. There have been a lot of concerns, for different reasons, and we do appreciate your coming to give us understanding on those matters and we appreciate your time this afternoon.

Mr ALLEN: Thank you, I genuinely appreciate the opportunity.

CHAIR: You took some questions on notice and could you have them back within 14 days, not 21, because we want to deliver a report on this.

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I understood that from your opening comments.

CHAIR: The Secretariat will be available to help you if you have any questions in relation to any of the matters that have been raised. Thank you again for your time and effort and your in-depth knowledge on these matters. We appreciate that.

Mr ALLEN: Thank you.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 4.36 p.m.)
