

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2

Friday 8 September 2006

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

AGEING, DISABILITY SERVICES

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. P. Forsythe (Chair)

The Hon. A. Catanzariti
The Hon. A. Chesterfield-Evans
Ms L. Rhiannon

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

PRESENT

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

Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Mr B. O'Reilly, *Director General*

Ms C. Mills, *Deputy Director General*

Ms E. McAlpine, *Deputy Director General*

Mr S. Mudge, *Chief Financial Officer*

Ms J. Milligan, *Director, Service Development and Planning*

CHAIR: I declare this hearing open to the public. I welcome the Minister and accompanying officials to the hearing. At this hearing the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Ageing and Disability Services. I will make some comments about procedural matters. This hearing is set up without microphones due to the Public Service Association work bans on room set up. I ask any audience members who have hearing difficulties to approach Committee staff, as the PSA has indicated if audience members have difficulties they will grant an exemption from the work bans. If the microphones are not set up, I ask members and witnesses to speak in a clear voice, one at a time, and for the audience to keep background noise to a minimum.

In accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines for the broadcasting of proceedings, only Committee members and witnesses may be filmed or recorded. People in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photos. In reporting the proceedings of the Committee you must take responsibility for what you publish or for what interpretation you place on anything that is said before the Committee. Guidelines on the broadcast of proceedings are available on the table by the door. Any messages from attendees in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee support staff to the Committee clerk. Minister, you and the officers accompanying you are reminded you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers while at the table.

I ask that Hansard be given access to material placed on the public record during the hearings. I also suggest if you are reading from an answer, particularly if it has anything complex in it, that copies be made available to Hansard as soon as possible. The usual practice in the House in relation to Hansard applies and is intended to ensure the accuracy of the transcript. I remind everyone to please turn off mobile phones, particularly if you are sitting near microphones. It is not good enough just to have them on silent as it interferes with Hansard recording equipment.

The Committee has agreed to the following format for the hearing. That is, we will ask questions in blocks of 20 minutes from the Opposition, 20 minutes from the crossbench and 20 minutes from the Government in rotation. I will divide the remaining time fairly and equally across the groups. The Committee has resolved to request that answers to any questions taken on notice be provided within 21 calendar days of the date they are received in your office. Do you anticipate any problem that?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No.

BRENDAN O'REILLY, Director-General, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, sworn and examined:

CAROL MILLS, Deputy Director General, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care,

ETHEL McALPINE, Deputy Director General, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care,

STEPHEN MUDGE, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Ageing, Disability And Home Care, and

JANETT MILLIGAN, Director, Service and Development and Planning, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Ageing and Disability Services open for examination. Minister, do you wish to make a brief opening statement?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Yes, I would like to make a brief statement. As Minister for Ageing and Disability Services I am pleased to say that the New South Wales Government has a strong track record of supporting the wellbeing of people with a disability, older people, their families and carers. If I may, I will deal with each portfolio area in turn. This year the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care receives record funding of more than \$1.75 billion. This is an increase in expenditure of over \$208 million or almost 12 per cent on last year's budget. The recent release of the New South Wales Government 10-year plan, Stronger Together, confirms the Government's commitment to improving services for people with a disability, their families and carers. Stronger Together is the result of an intensive period of consultation over the past 15 months, involving people with a disability, their families, carers, as well as a broad spectrum of service providers and advocates.

Stronger Together details how we will provide greater assistance and long-term practical solutions, backed with more than \$1 billion in new funding over the first five years. This includes an immediate commitment of \$154 million in this financial year, which includes more than \$6 million to strengthen families enabling children with disabilities to grow up in a family and participate in the community; in excess of \$87 million spent to promote community inclusion, supporting adults with disabilities to live in and be part of the community; and over \$61 million will go to improving services, providing fairer and clearer ways to access services, greater accountability and more opportunities for innovation.

Stronger Together sets out key policy shifts to build a sustainable, flexible and more workable disability support system. Stronger Together provides far greater emphasis on early assistance—help before people reach a crisis; supports that work for the person and their family, rather than the system; clear entry and exit points; access based on functional need, rather than type of disability; practical help in a timely way; and smoother transitions from early childhood to school, school to work or community participation, and from childhood to adulthood and through to retirement. Stronger Together uses research and evidence to improve practice and deliver better services; innovation—separate funding will actively promote new ways of delivering services; and work force development—strategies with non-government agencies to build a sustainable and skilled work force.

Stronger Together will have a major impact on disability services, and the benefits are already beginning to flow. The plan delivers much more help for families, more help for adults with disabilities and real change to a system that has not been flexible or responsive enough. Stronger Together delivers this in ways that recognise that people with disability have diverse physical, social, psychological and cultural needs that can be met in different ways. While Stronger Together includes a \$1.3 billion increase in funding, it also targets our assistance more fairly and effectively. The approach to accommodation under Stronger Together has been guided by the accommodation and support paper released in January 2006. That paper provides a framework for delivering a greater focus on assistance and flexibility; a wider range of specialist support services and, as a result, a broader range of accommodation support for people with a disability is currently being developed.

Through Stronger Together we will invest an additional \$40 million to support innovative approaches. We are continuing to invest in accommodation services, with 180 new places this year. Stronger Together outlines plans to continue to close large residential centres, with more suitable and flexible accommodation options being offered as an alternative. Support for school leavers with a disability was increased to \$69 million in the last financial year so that people in the Community Participation Program can receive a minimum of three days or 18 hours of support a week. This will increase early in 2007 to four days a week for all young people accessing Community Participation and to five days a week for people with very high support needs. The experience of purchasing services for the community participation program in 2006 will further inform the Government's competitive tendering practices. We are also committed to providing greater certainty for families as their children grow older and need different types of support. More than \$31 million will be provided over five years to assist children and families. In addition to the increased funding of \$6 million in the last financial year for community support teams, we will provide an additional 600 therapy places for children and adults with disabilities in this financial year, at a cost of more than \$3 million.

The Attendant Care Program is also increasing by 70 new places in this financial year and an extra 320 places over the next five years. The rollout of these places commenced in July this year, with 43 people already being recommended for a place on the program. This is a turning point for social policy in New South Wales. As significant as this plan is, it has been acknowledged that it cannot address all the challenges facing the disability sector. That is why the Premier wrote to the Prime Minister last week asking for the Commonwealth to match our \$1.3 billion commitment. The Commonwealth has progressively diminished its share of disability spending over the past five years, dropping from 20.5 per cent to just 16 per cent. As the Committee may be aware, the last two funding offers from the Commonwealth have been on a dollar-for-dollar basis. We now ask the Commonwealth to recommit to people with disability and their families and match our \$1.3 billion.

Stronger Together is a generous and comprehensive package that for the first time puts disability services where they should be, at the top of our policy agenda. Working on a better home and community care agreement with the Commonwealth has continued to be a key focus of the portfolio since I became Minister. I am pleased to say that there have been significant improvements, particularly in the co-operation from the Commonwealth. I recently signed the new Home and Community Care State Plan. The New South Wales Government contributes about 40 per cent of its budget. In the last financial year the total funding for the Home and Community Care Program was almost \$444 million. This represented an increase of around \$30 million. In any one month the Home Care Service provides more than 37,000 people with a home care worker going into their homes to assist them. I am pleased to say that the Home Care Service recently undertook a satisfaction survey conducted by an independent research company and designed to test the levels of satisfaction among carers and people currently receiving home care services.

The sample respondents were representative of all home care services. The survey showed that a total of 94 per cent of people were satisfied with their services. Madam Chair, this is an outstanding result considering that last financial year home care provided more than 3.6 million hours of service and assisted more than 52,500 people. Respondents to the survey cited the high standard of service, promptness, reliability and quality of home care staff as the main reasons for this satisfaction. Finally, if I may turn to ageing for a moment, the New South Wales Government is committed to acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of older people in New South Wales. As part of this ongoing commitment to seniors the Government continues to hold a number of events and concerts. This year Seniors Week celebrated its forty-eighth year. It is the largest event for seniors in the southern hemisphere and is an opportunity to thank, celebrate and recognise older people for their contributions to the community. With more than one million people in New South Wales over 60, the Live Life campaign is designed to challenge traditional perceptions about ageing, and it encourages seniors to remain healthy and active.

In addition to these high-profile events and concerts, the Government funds the New South Wales Seniors Card scheme, administered by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. The card offers a range of transport concessions and private sector discounts. The Government also provides funding for an ageing program that is progressively focused on funding innovative approaches that can achieve improved outcomes for older people, and they are aligned with key priorities in ageing. The increased funding for the ageing program reflects the Government's strong commitment to older people in New South Wales. Madam Chair, there is one final point that I would

like to make before we move on to questions from Committee members. I am quite prepared to provide a private briefing on any matters concerning individuals out of session to any members of the Committee that would like a briefing. Neither I nor the department will provide information about individuals and their personal circumstances in a public forum. It is unhelpful and inappropriate for private information to be shared in this context.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Does the disability department have an executive and ministerial correspondence unit? If so, what is it called and how many people work in it?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Yes, it does. I will leave Mr O'Reilly to answer that question, with the indulgence of the Chair.

Mr O'REILLY: We have a unit called the Public Accountability Branch, which employs 13 people full-time. We have approximately 20,000 pieces of correspondence per year. That correspondence is made up of inquiries from families, carers, clients, local members and of course government members.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: A large amount of promotional material was produced for the distribution of information about the Government's Stronger Together Program. Could you provide the Committee with information as to how much all of that promotional material cost?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: On 26 May 2006 the Premier and I launched the New South Wales Government's 10-year plan for disability services, Stronger Together. Much of the promotional material the honourable member is asking about was in relation to that launch. This plan was the result of exhaustive consultation, mostly conducted by me and senior officers of the department over a period of several months with a broad spectrum of service providers and families and those living with a disability. Stronger Together is the blueprint for making disability services in this State fairer, easier to access and more effective in providing the right kind of help at the right time. The plan includes a significant boost in funding with an additional \$1 billion over the next five years.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: If I may be impolite, I think we all know what Stronger Together was about. I was simply after the cost of the promotional material.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The amount of \$183,000 or 0.0018 per cent was spent to promote, produce and distribute the planning—in Braille, plain English and 10 different community languages.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is any further promotional material planned between now and March next year for Stronger Together?

Mr O'REILLY: As we roll out the funding towards Stronger Together there will be consultations with the community linked to that. But as far as any major launches or whatever, no, not at this stage.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many DADHC staff are under investigation for allegations of misconduct over the last year and what information can you provide to the Committee in regard to categories of breaches that they might be being investigated for?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Mr O'Reilly can help with that.

Mr O'REILLY: If an allegation is made that a staff member has used inappropriate physical force in the management of people with a disability or frail older people a risk assessment is immediately conducted. That may result in a change of roster or supervision of the workers by other staff members. Allegations are reported to the New South Wales Police and other relevant bodies such as the Department of Community Services or the Ombudsman.

Following receipt of clearance by the relevant external agencies the department conducts its own investigation pursuant to the procedures outlined in the legislation. I can give a snapshot picture between May and August 2006. Of our twelve and a half thousand staff we had a total of 102

investigations relating to matters that fall under misconduct. They include from inappropriate physical conduct—I can provide the Committee with the breakdowns of each of these categories if you so wish.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That might be useful.

Mr O'REILLY: I do not know whether you want me to go through them now, Mr Ryan.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are there many categories?

Mr O'REILLY: Inappropriate physical conduct has twelve; neglect, five; restrictive practices, one; verbal or emotional abuse, four; complaints that do not fall into any particular category, one; two relating to a conviction; five relating to credit cards; grievances, four; code of conduct, 38; corrupt conduct, two; hours worked, four; misuse of a communication device, two; performance management, nine; theft, five; and systemic, one. As I said, they are allegations into which we are conducting investigations.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Over a four-month period of May to August?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Can you provide at a later date the details of what a whole year looks like?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes

CHAIR: Are you taking that on notice?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, I will.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I understand that last year the department allocated \$78,000, which was the residue from the budget pertaining to residential care, for an investigation into systems in the department particularly relating to allegations about misconduct in large residential centres. I asked the Minister a question in Parliament about it and he confirmed that that had been occurring. Has that investigation been done and what were its findings?

Ms McALPINE: We have conducted an investigation into practices in a couple of units in Western Sydney. In one unit the allegations were not substantiated. In the other situation, prosecutions have been launched against some staff.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am aware of the allegations generally surrounding, I think, the Marsden Centre.

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I was referring to the \$78,000 allocated for a special study relating to staff practices and assaults on clients because a large number had been reported and it was considered sufficiently serious that it was necessary for the department to specifically survey them. Are you aware of the study to which I am referring?

Ms McALPINE: No. We did an audit on a range of group homes, but that involved a number of quality practice issues. Can I take this question on notice?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I recall seeing Ms Milligan's name attached to the approval. Ms Milligan, do you know the study to which I am referring?

Ms MILLIGAN: No, I do not. I need a bit more information.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can we take that question on notice?

CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am aware that when DADHC and home and community care staff are employed they are subjected to a criminal record check and a working-with-children check. Are regular follow-up checks undertaken and what happens with staff who were employed prior to that becoming standard practice for the department? How many staff would not have been checked in that fashion because they were employed before checking became routine practice?

Mr O'REILLY: Any staff member who now commences employment with the department, be it in home care or with DADHC, is subjected to a criminal record check. Under the law, any staff member who has been convicted of any offence must report that to their employer. That matter is taken into consideration. Employees who commenced work prior to the implementation of the checking process are not required to undergo a criminal record check.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many employees fall into that category?

Mr O'REILLY: I will try to get that information, but it may be difficult. It will be an approximate given the turnover of staff in that area.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That is understandable.

CHAIR: You will take that question on notice?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Referring to the matter I raised earlier, if it helps I can read a section of the Minister's answer given in response to my question on notice. It states:

In the past 18 months there have been a number of serious allegations in disability accommodation services. The department was concerned about this and has already made a decision to conduct a comprehensive review of a sample of group homes. The review involves visiting each group and measuring its performance against policies, procedures, legislation and other relevant standards. That in addition to and separate from existing quality assurance systems are in place for all disability services. This is a special review budgeted at \$76,000.

Do you know the review to which I am referring? Has that been completed?

Ms McALPINE: I do not have a final report on that at this stage.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Do you know when that is expected to occur? This answer was given on 8 June.

Ms McALPINE: We will let you know.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Can you update it Committee on what has happened with regard to the allegations made about the Marsden Centre, the Tariro unit and so on. I understand a number of matters that might have been before the court. Have any of those been finalised?

Ms McALPINE: Not to my knowledge at this stage.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many people were charged and are before the courts?

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

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How much does the department have to spend on backfilling where staff are the subject of complaints and have to be either suspended or redirected to duties that they would not otherwise perform?

Mr O'REILLY: We would have provide the figure on notice. However, you are correct, any member of staff about whom an allegation is made with regard to the standard of care or support provided to any of our clients is stood aside. They are stood down, most likely with pay. If the matter is serious, and we can justify it, they are suspended without pay. In other cases, where the allegation

will take some time to be investigated, they are moved off client contact duty. That would require backfilling. That is done either by the employment of temporary assistance within the service area or by way of overtime.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: At one stage you needed to write to the Police Commissioner to give him a hurry-up because it was costing about \$400,000 in one instance. Is that an unusual occurrence? Obviously writing to the commissioner would be unusual, but is that an unusual estimation or is it common?

Mr O'REILLY: You are correct, that case was unusual. However, given that we may have up to 80 people under investigation at any point, we would have to do the sums to work out how those positions were backfilled. If they were not client support positions, it may be that the position was not backfilled.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That somewhat deals with people employed by DADHC. What are your expectations with regard to people reported for misconduct in non-government organisations [NGO], who do essentially the same task? What do you expect of them and how do you ensure that they carry out inquiries and investigations that are similar to yours?

Mr O'REILLY: When we are made aware of an allegation about a staff member or an employee in an NGO, we liaise with the NGO. They have a set of standards and procedures they have to follow in those matters. Also, depending on the seriousness of the matter, the Ombudsman is informed. The Ombudsman may also want to follow up with an action plan or an approach. The NGOs are well aware of their obligations. They have set procedures and arrangements for handling those matters.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Do you keep any statistics relating to how many complaints are made about NGOs that would fall into similar categories to those you have referred to in DADHC?

Ms McALPINE: No.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What sort of monitoring do you do to ensure that NGOs do the right thing when, for example, someone is accused of misconduct? You would remove that person from client contact. How are you sure that that happens with NGOs?

Mr O'REILLY: If we are made aware of it, we contact the NGO to ensure it is following the procedures as a matter of course. It is very seldom that we need to tell them that the procedure is to stand aside the staff member. Generally the NGOs immediately take the appropriate action and as a courtesy let us know what has happened.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I asked some questions in June relating to an NGO called the Centre at Bankstown. I think it might sometimes called the Bankstown Handicapped Children's Centre. Has the department called in consultants to investigate a number of serious fraud allegations and client mistreatment at that organisation? Is it true that that has occurred in the past? What action do you intend to take to ensure that the centre exercises better standards?

Mr O'REILLY: The department undertook a review of the Bankstown Handicapped Children's Centre in June and July 2004. That was the earlier review. This review looked at the quality of services being provided and service management generally. Following the review, the centre commenced implementation of an improvement plan, which covered all aspects of service quality and management that were identified as requiring improvement. The department arranged for an independent financial audit of the centre's operations. At that time, no critical issues were found in the audit in relation to the management of government funds.

The former community services commissioner, Roger West, was engaged to assist the centre to implement the recommendations from the review. The implementation of the improvement plan is now complete, with the exception of the movement of two young people for whom transition planning is currently under way. That was in line with the recommendation that numbers be reduced within the centre by 20 per cent. The outcome is that the department considers that the centre has made progress in implementing the recommendations from that review.

Since that period of time, a number of other allegations have been made relating to a range of matters predominantly around the management side of the centre, human resources, with some relating to client matters. We again employed an independent consultant to conduct the review. The findings of the report on the centre came in last week and those findings are that a number of the allegations were not substantiated at all. The general management of the centre and the human resources is fair to reasonable, it can be improved, but that is the case. The client contact one is still current and we are waiting on a report.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Would you give the Committee the names of the two consultants you used to investigate those matters?

Mr O'REILLY: Off the top of my head, I cannot. One would have been from WalterTurnbull Consultants, which is our contracted agent with respect to matters to do with management and financial areas. I cannot think of the name of the person who did the client one, they can get back to you on that.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How much money has the department spent on external consultants to investigate the centre?

Mr O'REILLY: I would need to get the figure for you.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I put it to you that the attention you have had to devote to the organisation is somewhat unusual in comparison with other organisations. Given that the chief executive officer [CEO] of that centre is apparently under watch to ensure that she does not fraudulently misappropriate funds, because she has a conviction for fraud. Do you not think it unusual that outstanding questions relating to the private use of resources to upgrade a motor vehicle that she owns are unresolved. There is good reason why that person should no longer be entrusted with the task of looking after vulnerable people in ageing and disability services—and Department of Community Services [DOCS] clients, for that matter.

Mr O'REILLY: With regard to the issues around fraud, I understand that there was a matter in, I think, the Industrial Commission relating to an allegation or claim that a fraudulent piece of material was included in the job application. That was investigated. The Industrial Commission ruled that it had happened and it went back to the board of the centre. The board was made aware of the findings and said that it was not material in the employment of the person; that the board had full confidence in the person. We have been told that. The review with regard to any financial irregularities has not shown that to be the case.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is it not true that what in fact happened was that it was the Magistrate's Court and that she has a criminal conviction; that what she did was fraudulently represent herself as having medical qualifications that she did not have; that, largely, the board you referred the matter to is comprised of people she has handpicked? In fact, one of the findings of the WalterTurnbull report to which you referred related to the manner in which the board is run; that she heavily influences that board in terms of its composition and the people who can join the organisation. Of course they would find that she has glowing credentials. I would have thought that anyone who falsely suggested she was a nurse or a doctor when she was not is an inappropriate person to have custody of 20 or 30 people with disabilities, or more, and \$5 million of government money plus a whole heap of DOCS clients.

Mr O'REILLY: I understand where you are coming from, Mr Ryan, but it is the board's decision. We are not the employer.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are you not able to instruct the board that unless it can find a more appropriate CEO it is at risk of losing its funding?

Mr O'REILLY: We would only do that if we could produce evidence that the funding was being misused.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: One of the recommendations of the original report to which you referred was that the centre employ a human relations person.

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are you aware that the human relations officer that was employed had no idea that the report had been undertaken and that the centre had responsibilities to carry out?

Mr O'REILLY: They employed a human resource manager.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: And he had no idea about the report to which you referred earlier. He had one of the most important series of recommendations to implement related to that report and he had never seen it until after he left the organisation—because he was sacked for doing his job.

Mr O'REILLY: That is one of the allegations that has been made by that person and I understand he is taking action for unfair dismissal.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Minister, why do you never state in any of your literature the total demand for places in supported accommodation? Surely, if one is planning anything one must have an idea of the total demand that one has to meet?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I must say that I dispute the assumption in the question that the Government is or that I am at all secretive about the issue of unmet demand. The fact of the matter is that I made a number of observations during the consultation period when we were in developing the Stronger Together Plan. I believe I have answered questions in the House to the effect that one way of measuring unmet demand is to measure the amount of care provided unpaid by family members, carers and volunteers. That would be, I think, the most socially useful measure of what might be described as "unmet demand". But, I am not sure what you are asking of me.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Let me move to another question. What is the current demand for the home-care high-needs pool in-service hours? What is the current demand and from where is it derived?

Ms McALPINE: I can give you a combine to number. At 1 July 2006, there were 567 people on the waiting list for high-level personal care services through the Attendant Care Program and/or the high needs.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is there is a waiting list that people go on?

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is identified demand.

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Given the changing eligibility criteria for access to disability services, how are you going to measure the level of demand for services and how is service access to be prioritised?

Ms MILLS: We have outlined in our strategies around accommodation reform and other areas, our directions in disability that support Stronger Together, to ensure that we have an effective eligibility system that caters for particularly some of the changing needs in eligibility, and growth in some areas that were not traditionally high-demand population groups, such as young people with autism; and that we have appropriate assessment tools in place to actually match the needs of those people on a priority basis to a range of different services. The strength of the new model of service is that we will be able to prioritise fairly robustly across the various types of service needs that may have to be met. Rather than simple demand, where somebody seeks, for example, an accommodation

service, we will actually have a robust system that looks at their service needs and puts a package of care around that individual.

For example, in the case of young people living at home, and children, we have introduced a range of new services that will allow us to support people living in their own homes, and to strengthen the capacities of families to assist young people with disability. The models of care are about matching on the basis of priority need. We are doing some work at a national level on that, both in disability and in ageing, to ensure that we have consistent assessment tools across the country, but we are also doing significant work within the department. We have engaged some academics from the Melbourne Institute of Technology to assist us in that process and that work is to be undertaken over the next 12 months.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Will you make public the levels of demand that you are working on and how those levels are derived for each category?

Ms MILLS: I think the point of what we are moving toward is not saying that we will simply have a waiting list based on somebody's express need but that our planning is based on a whole range of data and that our matching of people with need will be around the tools that they require to support themselves either in the community or in accommodation, if that is what is needed. It will not be a simple case of saying here is an indicator of a waiting list.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am not asking for a waiting list. These people may not have applied to you to be on a waiting list at all. If we are trying to plan a service or talk about models, surely not only the Government is doing that, I would imagine the private sector does it as well, why does the Government not provide guidelines of what the problem is? Surely there must be academics. You could go to AISW presumably and they say older people X per cent are likely to have this degree of disability; so you get a figure. But that is a figure.

The Government in its paper it puts out says that it has got X more places but it never says that X is a fraction of how many there is likely to be out there. It is like in one way saying, "We are terrific" and the fact that the percentage being dealt with is less than necessary is neither here nor there. Why can the Government not put out what it believes the level of demand is? Perhaps the Minister should answer this. This is a political question, Minister. Why do you not say, "This is the level of demand we believe to exist"?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I suppose that is the point I have been making at a political level, that what we do need are good assessment tools. As Ms Mills has already said, we need to be—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You need more data about the problem first, surely? For you to assess the seriousness of the problem or how you are going to deal with it you need to define what the problem is, surely?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Much of the work that we put in place during the Stronger Together consultations was based on the department's own data, based on a lot of published studies, based on consultation with academics, based on, I think, some of the more appropriate—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can we have publicly what that base is—what you believe the demand is? We hear all about how wonderful the program is but what demand is it based on?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am still not sure what question you are asking. Are you asking for our estimates over the next 10 years or two years or five years, the length of the budget estimates, what we think the growth of various categories of—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Now would be a great start and then projections into the future.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: For the best and most reliable statistics in relation to those matters I refer all members of the Committee—and we are happy to refine them, develop them

and provide them in the context of the department's own consideration—to the publicly available Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] figures.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you would just say go on Australian Bureau of Statistics figures?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The ABS does exist as an organisation for that purpose.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Can I say that your planning is based on ABS figures? That is the key data element that you are using for your plans, would you agree with that statement or not?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The interpretation the department makes of Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, other published data and the census data. It is all relatively accessible information, it is not a secret. Only persons categorised by the relevant Federal agencies and, indeed, ourselves with different categories of need and disability; it is public information.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The disability sector does seem to have difficulty with that idea. If you are looking at different models, presumably some people hire help independently from government providers and presumably, if I understand correctly, some American corporations want to provide these sorts of services. Is the Government looking at any sort of training for home care workers through TAFE or whatever so that these sorts of private contracts could be facilitated?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am not sure what you are referring to there. You mean are we going to privatise Home and Community Care [HACC] services?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No. If the Government is limited in what it can provide, which seems to be the case, there are two possibilities: either people can get other corporations to provide care—the private system; or individuals might hire other individuals to help them without a corporate overhead sucking out on that. If the Government were to train some home care workers and accredit them that would provide an extra resource in the community.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: That is an interesting idea.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The Government has not thought of it yet?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think we have thought of something a fair bit more important, which is a parallel area of government policy in regard to disability and home care, but a large percentage of people finding themselves in a traumatic situation requiring personal care and so on, end up there as a result of motor vehicle trauma. I think you know, and it is probably a well rehearsed response of mine, the role that that long-term care plan will play, I suspect—and we have been through this in response to a number of public inquiries—in creating somewhat of a private market in personal service and personal care.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Will you have a training and accreditation system for private home care workers? Can you investigate that?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am happy to take that question on notice and investigate it.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You said it is a new idea, so that it is fine.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It is important to understand that most people do not have the financial capacity to pay for their own care. The people in the circumstance that you are describing generally speaking have severe limitations on their income and do not have the capacity to enter the private market, except if they are in a situation where their injuries are compensable or their families have access to significant resources that a large percentage of them would not.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would you investigate that matter and get back to me maybe next year and report progress, if we are both here next year?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am happy to investigate it.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Minister, what procedures does the department have in place to ensure that the Standards in Action within the department's disability policy framework is being implemented in all areas of ageing and disability?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The standards and action?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Standards in Action.

Ms MILLIGAN: You are asking about the application of general disability standards in all funded services?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I think there is a document called Standards in Action.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes, it is within your policy framework.

Ms MILLIGAN: Yes. Standards in Action is a document that provides a description and assistance to service providers in how they implement or operationalise the disability standards. So, yes, I understand the document you are referring to. Your question was how do we make sure that is happening. I would like to provide some information about the way in which we monitor our funded services. I think you may have heard us talk previously about a new approach to monitoring that we have been working on for the last little while called the integrated monitoring framework. That was launched and operationalised in the last 12 months.

So at the end of last year, about September/October, we did extensive staff training of our staff who are going to be monitoring the funded services. We then did about six weeks worth of briefing around New South Wales for funded service providers. In November we began monitoring services using this new approach. It actually includes what we call a full service review where we go through the door of the service and assess them against the disability standards. The service review instrument we use has what we call seven domains and altogether there are 23 performance categories or indicators that we assess. The disability standards are included in that instrument in the performance indicators that we assess the providers against.

To the end of June we have had 309 of those full service reviews completed across the State, so we have just done the first, I guess, preliminary analysis of 309 outcomes. To answer your question, in summary, the way in which we are ensuring that disability standards are applied in funded services is through a service review instrument, which is an on-site review of the practice.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: You said the first analysis has been done. What do you do with that analysis? Is it released publicly? Is it circulated to everybody? I am just trying to understand the process.

Ms MILLIGAN: We have included a summary of the outcomes in the department's annual report, which, of course, is being finalised for the 2005-06 year. It was a review of 309 services, so it is the beginning. Obviously, that is not the majority of services. As we do more service reviews, that analysis will become more robust and more complete. The outcomes of a review are used obviously with the individual service provider, so if there are any of those 23 elements that are found to be not completely met, because we assess a provider as having fully met, partially met or not met—they are the three options—if there are any unmet or partially met, the provider is required to develop an action plan to fix them.

Clearly we use the outcome at the individual service organisation level. But when we look at the data and say, "309", we are actually looking for trends and if we have any of those elements that

systematically seem to be weak. If I can add one last point, for example, before we implemented this approach to monitoring, we had a separate process for monitoring the HACC system in New South Wales. The year before we actually concluded a three-year validation of every HACC service provider in New South Wales, so we actually had done all of them. When we looked at the complete data we could see that we had three elements that, across the State, were a bit under par.

What we have done now is develop some training materials for providers across New South Wales and we are now going back to the HACC to say systemically it looked as though people needed a bit more around privacy issues, advocacy issues and the third one does not come immediately to mind. We look at the data, identify any trends, any systemic weaknesses where we need to go back into the system and provide increased skills or resources.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Are clients involved in the development and implementation of training processes for DADHC employees?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: In what sense? Are clients' needs taken into consideration or client advocate groups' views' considered?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes, that is what I am trying to explore with the question. Are they involved and at what level?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I will let one of the officers deal with the detail, but I will make a general point that the Government's position in remaking disability services policy has been based on a great deal of input from people with a disability themselves, their families and carers, as well as advocacy organisations. A lot of the entire restructuring of the policy framework has taken shape as a result of quite detailed and deep consultations with a wide range of people and not just—if I can be so bold as to use the term—the usual suspects. We did attempt to drill down and have consultations with people who may not necessarily have had a voice in the system previously. The whole framework is based on extensive consultations with clients but on addressing the specific issue on client input and training programs, we will either have to take it on notice or maybe one of the officers can answer that.

Ms McALPINE: In the group home sector the staff qualification is competency based training certificate III, which requires active learning. The worker does those elements. For example, if it was on planning, they might develop a plan for a skill development with a client, so it is directly related to the needs of the clients in the house. At the moment we are offering training on intensive communication and behaviour, which is to enhance our staff's capacity in the group home sector to appropriately interact with people with challenging behaviours and defuse those challenging behaviours before they escalate. It is a very intensive program and the trainer spends a full day in the group home to see all of the clients and understand the needs before the staff go off site for intensive training and that training is directly related to the needs of the clients in their own house.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: When was the department's code of conduct for employees established?

Mr O'REILLY: I would have to look up the actual date, but we do have a code of conduct that has been signed off and published throughout the department. I would have to get back to you on the actual date.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Was it one year ago or three years ago?

Mr O'REILLY: It was quite a few years ago.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Were the relevant unions and the Disability Advisory Council involved in the development of the code of conduct?

Mr O'REILLY: Certainly the relevant unions were. The code of conduct is well understood and has been presented to the various advocacy groups, expert advisory committees and disability organisations.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: How were they involved? Was it in the context of getting feedback or more just delivering it as it is? Do you show it to them, get feedback from them and then change it?

Mr O'REILLY: That is right.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: How does DADHC ensure employee aware of the code of conduct?

Mr O'REILLY: We have an induction program for employees. At the time of appointment, as part of the induction program, people are made aware of the code of conduct. It is also on the web site.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Is the induction program five minutes in a briefing session or does it go for a day?

Mr O'REILLY: It normally goes for a day from the central side of explaining how the department comes together, the various policies and business streams. Also, at the regional level there is another induction program at the workplace where the person will be working.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Would you say that all DADHC employees receive formal training in the code of conduct?

Mr O'REILLY: I would not say it is formal training. When the employee starts with the department they are made aware of the code of conduct, they are given a copy and they are given access to it so they are fully aware of it, but as far as being trained in the code of conduct itself, it is not a formalised approach.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: How many breaches were there of the code of conduct in the last financial year?

Mr O'REILLY: I can only give you that snapshot that I mentioned earlier on. I am going to get that information for the Committee for the full year.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Minister, would you please advise the Committee what you have done to try to open Nardy House in the Bega Valley?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Firstly, the Government wants Nardy House to open as soon as possible. I want to make another point, because there has been a bit of public misunderstanding about this, that there are funds are immediately available to open Nardy House. The Government and the department's officers have worked tirelessly with the Nardy House Committee, Bega Valley Respite Co-ordination Group and the local community to reach a solution to secure the opening of Nardy House.

The Government did provide a commitment to fund Nardy House but this, of course, never amounted to a blank cheque. As all members of the Committee would understand, public dollars have to be accounted for. Indeed, the very purpose of this Committee is to make sure that happens in a proper way. In August last year I enlisted the assistance of the Disability Council of New South Wales to help to broker a solution to what has become quite a difficult problem. The Director of the Office of the Disability Council, Mr Dougie Herd, visited the region on 22 and 23 August. He met with local families, respite providers, the Nardy House Committee and senior representatives of the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. He also received a number of personal letters from people with a disability and their families.

As some members would be aware, I released Mr Herd's report on Nardy House to all relevant stakeholders on the day that I received it. I accepted its findings and sought to implement its nine recommendations. I urged all sides to adopt a more flexible approach to ensure that people with disabilities in the Bega Valley gain access to services at Nardy House as soon as possible. At the heart of the issues currently being struggled with between the Nardy House Committee and the agency is the issue of equity.

It is very important that as many people as possible, given the Government's current funding framework, have access to respite services. Funding offers of over \$400,000 per year have been made on a number of occasions and DADHC has written to the Nardy House Management Committee more than a dozen times urging them to accept the funding offer and open Nardy House. Mr Herd's report is available on the DADHC web site. As honourable members are aware, I have answered a number of questions in the House on this matter and been privileged to put forward the Government and the agency's view on a number of occasions in the public media.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Will you advise the Committee about indexation for non-government organisations?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Indexation is provided to funded organisations to help them respond to movements in costs in relation to the provision of their services. The key cost drivers in human services are typically wages and operational costs such as petrol, consumables and intangibles such as insurance. Government agencies determine indexation rates to apply to their funding programs by considering factors such as movements in the consumer price index and general wage movements. The consumer price index is one of the indicators considered but it is not the sole determinant of the rate to be paid to assist service providers to meet cost increases. The New South Wales Government has provided 3.3 per cent indexation to funded disability services on their grants this year. Organisations receive indexation on their total grant, not just on a notional proportion to be paid in wages.

The rate considered movements in wages that make up a large percentage of the expenditure of a typical service organisation. The Social and Community Services (State) Award has had a 3.5 per cent increase from 1 July. As the Home and Community Care [HACC] Program is a jointly funded program with the Commonwealth, the rate of indexation to be paid is not just a New South Wales decision. I have indicated to the Commonwealth that its offer of 2.1 per cent indexation for the Home and Community Care Program this year is not adequate. The New South Wales State HACC plan for the current year includes an indexation rate of 3.3 per cent. I am seeking my Commonwealth colleague's agreement to the HACC plan for 2006-07.

I make the point that we are funding Stronger Together, which is our \$1.3 billion plan to improve disability services. However, as the vast majority of those services will be provided through non-government organisations over the next five years, it is important for the Commonwealth Government to understand that the proper viability and proper function of those organisations require proper indexation of their costs.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: What has that Government done to improve the lives of people with a disability living in boarding houses?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Boarding and lodging houses provide long-term, single-room furnished accommodation with shared facilities. Most Committee members would be familiar with the fact that they provide an important source of low-cost private rental accommodation for people on low incomes. The New South Wales Government has been supporting the boarding house sector through providing a land tax exemption to boarding houses providing affordable long-term accommodation to lower-income earners, and through providing financial assistance with fire safety upgrading through the Boarding House Financial Assistance Program. Grants are also available for fire safety where existing boarding houses are being extended and when new boarding houses are being constructed. Enabling local government to set rates for boarding houses at the residential rate rather than the business rate is also an important contribution.

The New South Wales government is committed to ensuring that minimum standards in boarding houses are maintained. Current regulations aimed at ensuring minimum standards in boarding houses cover physical amenity and safety in local government regulations and the Building Code of Australia. Fire safety is provided for in the environmental planning and assessment regulations and the Building Code of Australia, and food safety and standards are provided in the New South Wales Food Act 2003 and the Australian Food Code. The New South Wales Government is also looking at existing incentives and standards, and ways to strengthen them by considering a new direction in occupancy arrangements for boarding house residents, working with councils to improve

the monitoring and enforcement of relevant existing standards, and examining the feasibility of extending the regulation for places of shared accommodation to smaller class 1b boarding houses.

The Government is also considering a three-part approach to providing additional protection for boarding house residents with disabilities through education and training for operators, additional advocacy for residents and reviewing the legislation that affords additional protection for this population of residents; providing even greater assistance to people with disabilities living in boarding houses; and considering existing protections under the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: This question relates to a previous inquiry undertaken by this Committee. What improvements has that Government made to community participation services?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The recent tender for the Community Participation Scheme has delivered significant changes that underline the improvement to the program for all young people and provide greater certainty for young people and their families. Some members would already be aware that these changes include a very strong focus on outcomes and individual planning and more choice of service types. In addition to the centre-based services, there are also individual community option services, as well as Aboriginal and culturally specific services. There is a greater emphasis on skill development and more focus on young people being involved in the local community and community activities. There is a guarantee of at least 18 hours or three days of support each week this year. In 2007 this will increase to four days each week, and five days for people with higher support needs. There are four funding levels ranging from moderate to exceptionally high, which are linked to the support needs for each person.

Other changes include recurrent, portable individual funding, which means that people can choose to move from one service provider to another and the funds go with them, with a higher proportion of funds going to direct service delivery; and a new program for young people with high physical support needs undertaking further education. The tender was held to identify the best placed providers to deliver the new Community Participation Program. The tender was for a set price; therefore, non-government providers competed solely on the basis of equality track record and their stated ability to deliver each element of the new program. Under the new Community Participation Program, 96 organisations have been approved to provide services through 284 outlets. This includes 200 centre-based services, 73 individual community-based option services, five Aboriginal specific services and six culturally or linguistically specific services. In a number of locations a second tender is being conducted to increase the number of places available. I am pleased to advise that we have implemented every recommendation from this Committee's post school options inquiry.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Considering all the work we put into that inquiry, that outcome is gratifying for clients and their families. My next question relates to a matter of interest to me. What additional disability spending will happen in the New England area? If so, how much, and what will this actually deliver for people with a disability and their families?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am pleased to advise the Committee and the Hon. Christine Robertson in particular that over the next five years it is estimated that the New England area will receive more than \$25 million in additional funding as a result of the Stronger Together plan. A total of \$5 million will be provided during this and the next financial year. Almost \$2 million of that will go towards providing six additional accommodation places during this and the next financial year; \$400,000 will provide more than 20 respite places during this and the next financial year; funding will be increased by \$200,000, which will create almost 20 new therapy places for children and adults during this and the next financial year; and two new family support places will be created during this and the next financial year.

Over the next two financial years additional funding will provide specialist behaviour support or behaviour intervention for 10 people. Attendant care will be boosted by \$100, 000, which will provide one new place in the Attendant Care Program within the New England area. Over the next two financial years funding of \$300,000 will be provided to fund an additional 12 places in day programs. This financial year, additional funding of \$500,000 will assist about 70 young people attending post school programs in the New England area.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Will there be additional disability spending in the Hunter area? If so, how much, and what will it deliver for people with a disability and their families?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: In the Hunter area there will be a total of \$24 million additional spending in the next financial year as a result of implementation of Stronger Together. This will mean that 47 people receive accommodation support, with investment of approximately \$10 million in this financial year. More than \$1 million will be spent to provide 70 new respite places during this and the next financial year. Almost \$1 million will be provided for additional therapy places, which will result in the creation of 80 new places for children and adults for therapy services in the Hunter.

There will be \$600,000 allocated for early intervention services. That will support 30 families during this and the new financial year and more than 240,000 people will receive direct case management support. This will be an additional investment of about a million dollars over the next financial year. Over the next two years there will be an additional \$200,000 for specialist behaviour support for 16 people, and this year \$600,000 will be provided to facilitate eight new places in the attendant care program and annually 400 young people will be attending the new post-school program. That is almost \$3 million in additional funding.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: If the Commonwealth matched our \$1.3 billion in disability services, what difference would it make to people with a disability and their families?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: As I mentioned to the Committee during my introductory remarks, last week the Premier wrote to the Prime Minister and strongly urged him to make sure the Commonwealth re-engaged and recommitted to disability spending. Obviously that is in the broader political context of the massive surplus the Commonwealth has and also in the context of the fiscal imbalances in regard to our State's obligations and funds collected by way of Commonwealth revenue from within our State.

The last two funding offers from the Commonwealth have been on a dollar-for-dollar basis to provide respite to older carers and to develop new responses for younger people in nursing homes. Just imagine the difference it would make if we doubled that amount of growth funding in each jurisdiction. It would make a real difference to people with a disability—more respite, more therapy, more in-home support, and case management support. Regrettably, I do not believe the Opposition—obviously I cannot speak for the Opposition members of this Committee—but the public comments of the Leader of the Opposition do not appear to be supportive of this view, that the Commonwealth should come to the party and match our new spending in the disability area.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Further, what is being done to improve occupational health and safety in the Department of Ageing, Disability And Home Care?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The New South Wales Government is committed to the improvement of occupational health and safety outcomes right across all forms of work both in the private and the public economy, but in the delivery of disability and home and community care services there are some special issues in relation to occupational health and safety. The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care faces these challenges and ensures safe work practices are provided. Often this is within a complex care environment of people with disabilities, older people and carers.

Recent progress has been very encouraging, with a \$4.9 million or 20.5 per cent decrease in premium costs from 2005-06 to 2006-07. This builds on the \$2.16 million or 8.3 per cent decrease in premium costs achieved in 2005-06. These are broad indicators of the success of occupational health and safety initiatives within the sector. The number of workers compensation claims in the department fell for the third consecutive year—again a broad indicator of improved occupational health and safety—by 17 per cent, from 1,383 in 2004-05 to 1,151 in 2005-06.

There has also been a fall in the number of claims from all identified accident types, including stress claims, which fell by more than a massive 50 per cent, from 118 in 2004-05 to 55 in 2005-06. Given the agency's remit and work, that is, work that is often provided in a home or community context, it is an achievement to be able to reduce claims for manual handling injuries from

458 in 2004-05 397 in 2005-06. That is a significant improvement. Assault injuries—I think again due to better procedures and processes in the management of the department's clients—have decreased by more than 22 per cent from 338 claims in 2004-05 261 in 2005-06.

The Government sees, as part of Stronger Together, the importance of providing good outcomes for the work force so as to encourage better work force planning in our public area and in the service providers who support many of our services. The Government will be providing, as part of the Stronger Together plan \$500,000 to get better occupational health and safety training in the disability sector.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: Will there be additional disability spending in the Cumberland-Prospect area? If so, how much, and what will this do for people with disabilities and their families?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The Cumberland-Prospect area will also be a recipient of significant funding. Part of the underlying benefit of Stronger Together is that some of the regional inequities that might have been thought to exist in the past are rapidly improved by the funding rollout over the next five years. It is estimated that the Cumberland-Prospect area will be receiving almost \$167 million. A total of \$20 million will be provided during this and the next financial year and spending on accommodation places will increase by over \$6 million during this and the next financial year, providing support to 32 individuals.

More than \$1 million will provide seven new respite places during this and the next financial year and there will be more funding for therapy, with 30 new therapy places for adults and children. Thirty families will be assisted by our family support program as a result of an investment of \$600,000 in early intervention services, and another 600 people will receive case management support investment of \$2.7 million over this and the next financial year. Over the next two financial years additional funding of \$200,000 will provide specialist support for 26 people with regard to behaviour management and the attendant care program will provide eight new places at a cost of \$600,000. Day programs over the next two financial years will be supplemented by \$1 million, and that will provide an extra 40 new places. Of course, the post-school programs will be supplemented by an additional \$2 million, which will enable about 300 young people to attend post-school programs.

CHAIR: We move to Opposition questions.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could I follow-up on a couple of things that I think will largely be taken on notice. Could you supply the Committee with the budget for the public accountability branch, that is, how much it costs? Also, there was reference earlier to an integrated monitoring framework tool. Could we have a copy of that? Additionally, Minister, those briefings you have been given on regional areas match some of your media releases that I have seen from time to time. Is it possible for you to provide the Committee with a full sweep of those, either the media releases or all those area updates of the details of Stronger Together for all the regions in New South Wales? I think the Committee would be grateful to see them all.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Obviously, I have no problem with that. It is possible Mr O'Reilly can provide some of this information immediately if it is of interest of the Committee. What was the second part of the question?

Ms MILLIGAN: The tools used in the monitoring are on the department's web site, so they are publicly available but, of course, we will provide them.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Mr O'Reilly can answer the part of the question about the public accountability branch now.

Mr O'REILLY: The branch's budget in the past financial year was \$642, 625.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Which part of DADHC provides those regional briefings for Stronger Together and the press releases that come from the department?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Sorry, be very careful what you are asking, Mr Ryan, please.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The briefings you have just been referring to and the media releases, which agency, which branch of DADHC provides that material?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think the media releases you are referring to would be prepared by my office. The information that DADHC provides in relation to regions is a result of inquiries by me. I am happy to provide the information to you.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: All of that research, for example, about what is going on in the New England area, which agency has split up Stronger Together and done that research? Is that public accountability or some other agency?

Mr O'REILLY: To get the details requires a number of divisions but it goes through what we call our Business Improvement Unit.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many people work in the Business Improvement Unit?

Mr O'REILLY: I will get you the exact number but about six.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Did the department purchase a number of properties in the Wentworth Falls area to be used as alternative accommodation for people moving out of Greystanes, and is it a fact that one of the properties located at Sinclair Crescent, Wentworth Falls has remained idle and unoccupied since early 2004?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We will provide an answer to that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is it a fact that the Marsden Centre requires upgrading? It is not in good physical condition because the external environment is inadequate for people in wheelchairs, it has inadequate facilities for dining and inadequate facilities for privacy and so forth. Has an audit been done of the Marsden Centre in that regard? If so, what was the result of the audit? When was the last time anything at the Marsden Centre was upgraded to address those issues?

Mr O'REILLY: There is a maintenance plan at the Marsden Centre. Refurbishment is actually going on. I will be at the Marsden Centre next week with all the maintenance staff and the regional director to look at how the maintenance program is going, what additional leads are required and whether we can sort out funding arrangements.

CHAIR: Are you taking that question on notice?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I have number of questions relating to community participation. How many existing services became ineligible for the Community Participation Program as a result of being unsuccessful in the tender process? How many clients then had to move from ineligible providers to new providers?

Ms MILLS: Approximately 40 existing services were unsuccessful in the tender. Some of those were seeking new outlets. So the 40 includes providers who sought new outlets to replace the outlet in which they were unsuccessful. Some of those agencies had only one outlet. Of that 40, three outlets are still subject to an appeal, so they may still become eligible, and about half of those organisations and outlets have applied in the retendering process.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could you give the Committee a break-up of the 40 as to which were new and which were existing?

Ms MILLS: In terms of outlets I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many clients were with ineligible providers and now have to move?

Ms MILLS: In total 345 clients were in services that were unsuccessful. However, as I said, around 50 per cent of those services have retendered. So around half of those clients may not be affected. In the outlet that is still pending an appeal there are about 40 clients altogether.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Was the Response Training on the Central Coast and the Hunter ultimately allowed to be eligible because there were questions about its not-for-profit status? Were they resolved?

Ms MILLS: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Was House With No Steps at Lake Macquarie successful in its appeal on probity?

Ms MILLS: No, it was not.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So now it is an ineligible provider?

Ms MILLS: That is correct.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How much did the consultants cost, and who were they, that assessed the tenders?

Ms MILLS: I would have to take the total budget as a question on notice but the majority of the assessment panels comprised DADHC staff with one independent person. So the fees attracted were only for the independents to sit on the panels. They were people with expertise in disability. In one case for the self-managed applications, which was a new form of program that we were seeking providers for, we brought somebody from Victoria, because they had expertise, to sit for a day on those panels.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Was there not further advice given—I am not sure of the name of the consultant—after the panels had determined their outcomes to make sure that there was a level of consistency across the measurement?

Ms MILLS: Yes, but we did that in house. But through the process we also had two probity auditors involved to ensure that the process was robust. One of those auditors provided advice on how to construct a tender. The other probity auditor observed the tender process to ensure that those actions were followed through on.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many clients have indicated that they wish to stay with their current ineligible providers?

Ms MILLS: That number is still being firmed up but approximately 50.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could you provide the Committee with information as to which services are going to have that alternative program?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think you know them already.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I may know some of them but I have discovered that the telephone, useful as it is, is not absolutely accurate.

Ms MILLS: I can give you the information off the top of my head but it may be slightly incorrect. You are aware of House With No Steps at Croudace Bay. A significant number of the existing clients have indicated that they would like, if possible, to remain there because they do not believe they can get an appropriate alternative service. A number of clients at Sylvan Vale have indicated that they have not been able to find an alternative service. I understand that the number is around 10 at this stage. There is an organisation called Focus in the Illawarra where six clients have

indicated their preference to stay based on the fact that there is not another existing provider for them to access.

There are a couple of clients at the Disability Trust in Wollongong who have not been able to identify a service provider. There are two or three at New Era, which is based in the Sutherland Shire. I understand that, of the 13 clients who are there, 10 have now started with another service but two or three have indicated that they have not been able to find a service yet. In the Eurobodalla council area there were three clients at an unsuccessful service who have not yet registered with us. Across the State there are about 100 clients who we would have expected to have registered, some of whom we have not yet been able to make contact with. So we are aware of the numbers of the organisations that have come forward to us and said that they had had clients wishing to remain.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Would it not have been useful to write to all clients in ineligible services outlining the option to stay? As I understand it, it largely passed around by word-of-mouth. The other complaint that I had is that with New Era, which is one that I raised in Parliament on numerous occasions, many of the parents felt somewhat pressured by constant phone calls from DADHC telling them that they had to choose another provider otherwise they would not have a funded service.

Many then elected to choose another service provider and it was not until after the Minister's announcement on 21 August that there would be some changes and then a modification from the Minister's staff to update that with the newspaper, that they knew about that option. The parents and families did not know about that option to choose to stay until well after many of them had already indicated that they would go to another service. They were reluctant and felt they were being somewhat dragooned into another service. Should there not have been some opportunity for them to choose again?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: So that it is clear to the Committee and to Mr Ryan—I think I have made the point to him a number of times in the Parliament—the arrangements that have been entered into reflect fairness and consistency. However, it was made quite clear to all our clients and all the services that participated in the tender, and it remains the case, that only those services that were successful in the tender would continue to offer community participation placements. Any arrangements that have been worked out, as I have said on a number of occasions, to ensure that individuals or particular families are not victims of this change are not community participation options; it is a matter of working out ways to manage the issues with families, DADHC and the relevant service providers.

The whole purpose of these changes is to enhance people's opportunities and to get better results in community participation. We have made it very clear to people—and I am very happy that the agency has been making it very clear to people—that the community participation options are the ones that offer the best alternatives to our clients. When those families have formed a different view we have worked through the issues with them. I just want to put that general point on the record of the Committee.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I understood that. But I have spoken to many people and many of them felt that they were being harassed and pressured by constant phone calls from DADHC staff to choose a community participation provider by a specific date, even after your announcement on 21 August.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It will probably become unproductive political banter if you and I push this back and forth. However, in my inquiries and dealings with parents from a number of different services falling into this category, some made the opposite point. That is, they felt that they had not had enough information about the options; they felt a little out in the cold. We did everything possible to ensure that neither of those outcomes occurred. On the one hand, we did not want to badger people, but we wanted to give them proper information and to advise them of the outcomes. On the other hand, we recognised that sometimes these changes involved significant decisions for those families. So we left them for periods of time to make those decisions as a family.

It is subjective what people might assess one way or the other. However, my sense of it is that there has been a high level of satisfaction with the approach. A lot of that was handled by Ms

Mills and DADHC regional staff with a great deal of sensitivity and intelligence. Yes, there will always be arguments back and forward that people were badgered or that they were not given enough information. That probably reflects that there has been a balance in our approach to get these families into a position in which they are comfortable with their choices.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I was interested in whether there were any people who elected to go with other service providers who, had they known they could stay with their current service provider, would have done so. Are we sure that nobody has been dragooned into other services? Parents have told me that they felt that way. What was done to ensure that they did not and that the option to stay was made clear to them?

Ms MILLS: The option to stay related to not being able to find an alternative provider. That has been clear to families. You mentioned New Era. Obviously I will not talk about individual clients, but I can assure you that in that case families were well informed. Families were also asked if they wanted advice. Telephone calls were not made if they did not want advice. I understand that families that have chosen alternative services have chosen to attend those alternative services. We have not been approached by families wishing to change their minds.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: There was a level of inconsistency about what was on offer. One regional director—I think in the Illawarra area—informed a family that their only way of staying with their existing service provider was if someone in the family died. A complaint has been made about this issue.

Ms MILLS: I would have to take that question on notice. I am not aware of such a case.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Will the people in these alternative programs receive the additional funding to ensure that they also get four to five days of service like those involved in the other community participation programs?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: There is an important terminology point in the framing of the question. The honourable member used the term "other community participation programs". There is only one community participation program. It is an important distinction.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I do not know what they are called. However, in any event, there are at least 50-odd people involved. Will they receive the additional funding that the community participation program participants receive? Will they also get four days of funding and five days of funding for high-support needs? Are they locked out of that and locked into three days?

Ms MILLS: We will negotiate each funding arrangement on an individual basis. This is not an alternative program. It is a placement process for each person who has been unable to find an appropriate community participation service in their area. We are committed to ensuring that they receive a number of hours that is commensurate with what people in the community participation program are receiving. The funding levels for that will vary, depending on the type of service being provided and the arrangements we make with each individual.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Does that mean they are locked out of four and five days from next year when this commences?

Ms MILLS: As I said, they will be offered a commensurate number of hours.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So I can be assured that all those people will have four or five days of service next year?

Ms MILLS: If they are eligible, yes. It depends on their funding band.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many people have applied for funding reassessment?

Ms MILLS: Approximately 20 per cent of clients.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I understand what each of the funding levels will be. Can you supply the Committee with information about the total cost of the additional funding for the higher levels of support above the standard? In other words, how much extra funding are you providing in total to people with higher support needs?

Ms MILLS: I cannot answer that because it will depend on—

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: My guess is that it is approximately equal to the \$6 million that was previously available to top up services to meet those needs.

Ms MILLS: It will not be far from that, but it will depend on the ultimate categories of need. The funding bands are up to a level. However, a number of organisations that were successful in their tender will already be providing more than the minimum number of hours. The final budgets will be on a case-by-case basis.

CHAIR: Are you taking that question on notice and providing the Committee with a figure?

MS MILLS: I will not be able to provide it within 21 days because the final figures will not be available until the assessments are completed.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am happy to have provided it when it is available. I might put a question on the other notice paper. However, you have largely answered the question that is roughly the \$6 million that was previously available. You will recall that I drew the department's attention to a number of boarding houses in the Marrickville area. I received some answers on notice indicating that one property was found to be outside the scope of the Act. I am not sure what that means and I would be grateful for information about how it came to be outside the scope of the Act. The answer to the question on notice states that referrals have been made to local councils where issues have been identified that relate to requirements under the Building Code of Australia.

Which of the properties identified were referred to local councils and for what reason—fire safety, hygiene or what? What has happened as a result of your referrals? I have been back to a number of those properties and the only thing that has changed at one property at which I saw no evidence of fire safety equipment, is that a lockable door has been installed at the front. It is probably designed to keep me out so that I cannot see the public areas. That would probably make it even harder for the residents to escape the building were it on fire.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Before we leave community participation, I would like to clarify that anyone who is in the arrangements described by Ms Mills can transfer to an appropriate community participation place. That has been made clear to all families. That has also been made clear to service providers that are still providing services for those clients. The funding will be subject to negotiations with the providers now and the CPI. It is clear that the Government is not doing anything other than ensuring that those families that have chosen that route have maximum flexibility. We want them to go into the community participation program because it has been designed to ensure best outcomes for young people with a disability in this post-school circumstance.

CHAIR: There is still the boarding house question to be answered.

Ms MILLIGAN: There were eight addresses to which you referred. It might be a little tedious, but I will go through them one at a time. Given that these are people's addresses, are you happy if I refer to the street name only or as boarding house one to eight?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Provided I can ultimately identify them, that will be fine. The street name will be helpful.

Ms MILLIGAN: As you said, we have worked with councils on all of those issues and you asked for follow up.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: One was found to be outside the scope. I was not sure what that meant because they were all potentially outside the scope if they were not housing people with disabilities.

Ms MILLIGAN: I believe that comment relates to one that was found to be a private residence. It may simply have been that a wrong street number was provided. We are aware of another property in the same street that is a boarding house. In terms of the initial list provided, one was clearly a private residence. With regard the first premises in Crystal Street, council worked with the owners and gave them two weeks to install smoke alarms. At a second property in Crystal Street—a bigger property—hard-wired smoke alarms have been installed and measures are underway to rectify amenity issues raised following council's inspections.

The property in Audley Street: Owner has installed smoke alarms, fire blankets and fire extinguishers—these are all council issues. Owner is still to install self-closing solid core doors and an alarm in the storeroom, and replace one of the ceilings. That work had not been completed at that point. The property in Stanmore Road: Council was issuing orders for fire safety, and health and amenity work—this was immediately following the council's initial contact. Cavendish Street, which the one we initially had trouble identifying: Owners to undertake a fire safety upgrade; caravans at the premises no longer occupied; electricity supply was not connected at the time of council's initial inspection and council is following up on that. I will give you some more information as I go on.

The property at the Boulevard: Subject to a development application [DA] to renovate the premises, the DA subject to State environmental planning police 10 and will also therefore, be considered by the department of Planning. The property in Warren Road: Council inspection revealed work required, including self-closing solid core doors in four of the individual rooms, I have the numbers there, pest control issues, door locks to exit doors to be changed, emergency lighting to hallway to be installed, general maintenance to some rooms. The owner also advised council, although it was not required by council, that renovations were being undertaken to the kitchen, hallways and some of the rooms.

Edgware Road: Hard-wired smoke alarms and fire extinguishers have been installed. In May council and the department made a joint visit that we could not identify initially. The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care [DADHC] undertook some assessments of residents and could not substantiate that two or more of them were handicapped persons under the definition in the Act. There was one person residing in the boarding house who was referred to Newtown Neighbourhood Centre For Additional Support Services.

The department sought a further update from council on 11 July particularly regarding the larger property in Crystal Street, Petersham and the property in Stanmore Road. On 21 August department officers visited a property in Crystal Street, assessed one person as being handicapped under the definition in the Act. That person was referred to Canterbury Community Health for relocation and further assistance. On 24 August the department and council visited jointly a property at Stanmore Road. Again they were unable to substantiate two or more persons being handicapped. Council was asked to follow up some issues on this boarding house and to provide the department with an update, together with an update on the property is in Audley Street, the Boulevard and Edgware Road.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Minister, is it true that DADHC put in \$510,000 for the building of Nardy House?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I will get the exact figure, but the amount of capital would be of that order.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Is it true that it has not had any people in it since April 2005?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think that is a well-canvassed view, yes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So, you have basically built a white elephant. Is that the bottom line?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I have not built a white elephant and the department has not built a white elephant. The Nardy House facility was, of course, substantially constructed using

taxpayer funds on a block of land that was donated for the purpose of respite care, and the Government stands ready as a today, as at any time in the last nine months or so, to provide sufficient and appropriate funding to allow Nardy House to commence operation as a respite service. I reject the idea that Nardy House is a white elephant, but I remain very concerned, as I think most people connected with the provisional disability services in the Bega Valley would be concerned, that the property remains on occupied.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If it is a property worth something like \$1 million, ready for respite care and not operating as a respite care facility, that may or may not be a white elephant, but it is certainly suboptimal use of resources.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Nardy House signed a funding agreement with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care in November 2002. The agreement provided for a one-off fixed payment of \$430, 000 plus goods and services tax to Nardy House Incorporated. The, funding was provided for the purpose of constructing, managing and maintaining a respite facility to be used by persons with a disability and respite service providers. No recurrent funding to Nardy House has yet been allocated because the current committee or would-be operators of Nardy House have been unable to take up consistent offers of funding by the department in relation to opening the service.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Was a tender for funding for Nardy House under the generic tendering policy received on 30 August? What is the status of that tender?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: What do you mean by "the generic tendering policy"?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Well, there is a tender process for the provision of services, is there not? People are able to tender to provide services, and they have done so?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The answer, on the surface it, to that question is "no".

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You have not received a tender?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No. No tender process has been put in place, as I understand it. Discussions with the Nardy House Committee have involved a number of proposals to open up the house on the basis that it provides respite under the normal arrangements—if that is what you mean by "generic" arrangements—such a service would be funded under by the department. The Nardy House Committee has said it will not allow any other operator to operate Nardy House, and therefore there is no point in a tender, generic or otherwise. The Nardy House Committee is quite confirmed in the view that it will not allow the premises to be occupied by any other service provider.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Why would you want another service provider when these people have arranged the house, built the house, identified a need for 45 people in that area for respite care and provided such a facility? Why would they now suddenly abandon the building they have gone to all this trouble to provide only to have someone else operate it? Is that not an unreasonable request?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Could I firstly make it clear that, without any disrespect to the Nardy House Committee, it is not currently a disability service provider. It is not unusual for organisations to partner with other organisations that are experienced service providers. Indeed, one of the points of discussion between the agency and the Nardy House Committee has been the opportunity that may exist or would exist for that committee to partner with an organisation with experience in providing those services. We agree that Nardy House should open as soon as possible. We agree that it is possible for it to open and provide appropriate respite services based on the arrangements we have discussed and made available to Nardy House. However, I make the point that the assumptions in your question are not accurate.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Have they not agreed to be mentored by CRAM House, which is an experienced provider? Is that organisation not mentoring Nardy House in respect of the tender?

Ms MILLS: The Minister has made the point that the model that was designed was that the access to the property would be for existing service providers in that area. Based on our analysis of need in the area and the proportion of funding in that area, there is sufficient funding available to allow that house to operate in partnership with other service providers.

Mr O'REILLY: And the CRAM Foundation has informed the department it will only provide a consultancy role and has declined to formally partner with the committee.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Obviously there are geographical difficulties but you are talking about expertise. Are you saying then there is a problem?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No. But Mr O'Reilly's answer to your question is quite important. CRAM House has not agreed to provide that. They would provide a consultancy service. That is not the same as them providing a mentoring role to Nardy House; they declined to do that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So you are saying it is a problem about the governance of Nardy House and you are feeling that the Nardy House Committee is inexperienced or does not liaise sufficiently well with existing providers. Is that the problem?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think there is a much more fundamental question than that. It is not what I think about Nardy House's committee capacity, it is what the Nardy House Committee is. The fact of the matter is that on 18 August, as I said to the Committee before, we appointed Mr Dougie Herd, the Director of the Disability Council, to broker a solution and the Nardy House Committee and Mr Herd met on a number of occasions and other disability service providers as well as officers of the department, and a detailed report has been prepared after the consultation. Most of the questions—in fact, all of the questions you have asked so far, I think are answered in that report.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Earlier, in response to a question from Ms Robertson, you said that report was on the web site. I went to the web site and searching under Nardy House, Bega or Herd of your web site brings nothing up. Could you please point me to that report?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I will do one better: I will make a hard copy of that report available. During the break I will check my searching skills and see if they exceed yours, but I am quite certain it is on the web site and accessible through the department's web site. We will be able to provide you with a hard copy of that report very quickly.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the report of the budget papers from last year there was an increase of \$10.5 million for home care services, page 19-12. Why was that \$10.5 million underspent by \$4.5 million in this year's budget?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Underspending of HACC funds, did you say?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think we will take that question on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the budget papers this year, the home care service spent only \$6 million of the \$10.5 million increase and the hours of service rose by only .04 per cent last year. Why was that?

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

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Minister, does the department have a policy in relation to the sexuality issues and needs of its clients?

Ms McALPINE: In relation to people who live in our accommodation services, yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Could you give me some details about the policy?

Ms McALPINE: Not off the top of my head. I would have to take it on notice.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Which aspect of the policy are you concerned with, or would you like a copy of documentation?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Mainly to understand to what degree the policy is being implemented.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We will take the question on notice.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Has the job description for the position of care worker been revised in recent years?

Ms McALPINE: Can I clarify, care worker as in home care?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Yes.

Ms McALPINE: I believe the award is constantly being reviewed. We are doing that at the moment. Refinements are made in that process.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you are saying it has been changed?

Ms McALPINE: I am saying that there is a review process under way. The last review was approximately 18 months ago. It is being reviewed at the moment. I do not know the specific changes but I would be happy to identify those.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: So you can take that on notice?

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: As part of that last question too, are there tasks that were previously undertaken by care workers that are no longer part of the job description? Has there been a considerable change in the degree of responsibility and tasks that those people are due to undertake?

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

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Does DADHC have a policy that clients are not to be provided with information about the relevant qualifications, experience and training that the care workers have or are obtaining?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am not aware of any such policy and I do not think the officers can help you at the moment. We will take that on notice and attempt to respond to it.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I am trying to get that understanding between the clients and the care workers.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: You are suggesting that we have an internal policy that prohibits our clients from inquiring as to the qualifications of those caring for them?

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Maybe you have a policy, but is it just the culture, that that is how it works, or is there actually a policy in place?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: For many of the categories of employee there are quite specific classifications and credentials required. They would be matters where if there was an inquiry I think it would be routine to respond as to what those credentials that have been attained were and what the qualifications of individuals would be. I am not aware of any prohibition on that information being made public to clients or to anyone who inquires. But, if it is convenient, we will take the question on notice and attempt a more comprehensive answer.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Just to tidy up on the code of conduct questions from previously: Is there a review being undertaken into the code of conduct and who would be involved in such a review if it is being undertaken?

Mr O'REILLY: I would have to check as to the timing of the arrangements we have for reviewing all of our policies and that sort of thing. We recently signed an agreement with the Public Service Association [PSA], which, as an adjunct also to the code of conduct regarding bullying or harassment in the workplace, we are a party to that arrangement with the PSA right across our organisation, which would form part of a code of conduct approach, particularly for our supervisory staff with regard to their responsibilities.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: Do you mean by that that there is not a review being undertaken or you feel that it is not needed at this stage?

Mr O'REILLY: I would need to see what the timetable is for the review.

Ms LEE RHIANNON: If you can take that on notice?

Mr O'REILLY: I will.

[Short adjournment]

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I indicate to the Committee that I have made available to the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans a copy of the report that he asked for. It is under the reports and publications section of the web site. In regard to the project that the Hon. John Ryan inquired about with respect to the \$76,000, the draft report is due at the end of October 2006. The terms of reference include factors of critical incidence and to make recommendations about quality improvements in systems and service.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: What would be the impact of a cut of 29,000 public servants in New South Wales on disability services?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: In fact, 29,000 public services positions represent approximately 10 per cent of the total work force of the public sector. A 10 per cent cut in the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, including casual staff, would equate to the deletion of over 1,000 positions. Indeed, 80 per cent of jobs in the department are performed on the front line, including nurses, care workers, residential support workers, community workers, therapists and psychologists. A further 6 per cent of jobs provide direct support to people living in residences through the provision of housekeeping, cooking, laundry, maintenance, trade activities and the like. This leaves 1,450 positions from which it would be required to make a cut of 1,000 positions.

The functions of these remaining 1,450 positions include managing Home Care branches, managing the front-line staff in accommodation services, managing the provision of grants to the non-government sector, services through the Guardianship Tribunal, management of the health and safety of your work force, the provision of learning and development to all staff of the organisation, and the co-ordination of rostering of front-line staff. Were regional and rural positions to be quarantined, the department has 920 positions from which to make the required cut of 1,000 positions. The impact would be the closure of the department's metropolitan regions and the removal of supervision and management of front-line service staff, the cessation of monitoring services provided through non-government organisations and the removal of health and safety support for staff.

Such a job cut would mean the closure of the department's central office and the Guardianship Tribunal; the removal of all support and services in respect of management and development of policies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of customers and staff; oversight of the direction of services to customers; management of the budget and finances of the department; provision of training and support; grants administration to non-government organisations; oversight of investigations into the conduct and performance of front-line staff; and the management of properties and leases for departmental-owned and rented accommodation. Might I say it would also mean the effective cessation of the Guardianship Tribunal statutory authorities.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: I have a question that affects me personally but I would imagine that it affects government services. What is the impact of petrol price increases on disability and home care services?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The New South Wales Government has been concerned for some time about the impact of rising petrol prices and the effect this is having on basic support services for people with a disability, older people and their carers. Some of the services hardest hit by high fuel prices are essentially support, such as Meals on Wheels and community transport. Thousands of older people and people with disabilities in New South Wales rely on these services every week. The impact of high petrol prices is particularly unfair on the many volunteers, who are the foundation of community care services. Volunteers who use their own vehicles to deliver meals to people in their homes and drive the elderly or people with a disability to essential appointments are most affected. Rising petrol costs are impacting significantly on volunteers' capacity to continue providing essential support.

The New South Wales Government is doing what it can to assist. Cost indexation is provided annually to assist services to meet increases in operational costs. In June 2006 more than \$1.4 million in recurrent funding was provided to help cover volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses. These funds have been distributed to Meals on Wheels services, transport services and other home and community care services where volunteers are required to undertake significant travel in delivering services to people with a disability, older people and their carers.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Will there be additional disability spending in the Riverina area? If so, how much, and what will this deliver for people with a disability and their families?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I thank the honourable member for his interest in disability services in the Riverina area, which is an important part of the State. He and I both share a love of the Riverina area, except he lives there and I do not. Over the next five years it is estimated that the Riverina-Murray area will receive more than \$30 million in additional funding. A total of more than \$6 million will be provided during this and the next financial year. Spending for accommodation places will increase by more than \$1 million during this and the next financial year. Some \$600,000 will be spent to provide more than 30 new respite places during this and the next financial year.

Funding of \$400,000 will be provided over the next two financial years, which will create 45 new therapy places for children and adults; three new places will be created during this and the next financial year. Ten behaviour intervention specialists and specialist places will be created in the next financial year, and in this financial year \$100,000 will be provided to fund one new place in the Attendant Care Program. Over the next two financial years funding will increase by \$200,000 to fund seven additional places. In this financial year \$1 million in additional funding will assist more than 140 young people attending post school programs.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I asked a question on notice, which was answered recently, about the number of additional supported accommodation units you had produced during 2006-07. The answer stated:

As the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care moves to introduce new models of accommodation support, it is expected that the number of places established over the next five years of the plan will exceed the target figure of 990 new specialist places.

I was interested to note that apparently the new models of support would result in more places. I feel compelled to ask you how you are able to exceed that target. Does it mean that there will be an increased use of congregate care models, or will you be able somehow to operate them more cheaply?

Ms McALPINE: There will be a greater range of models, not just congregate care but also opportunities for people to be supported in more individual arrangements through in-home support services. The challenge for us is to ensure that the support needs of people are matched to the right model so that we do not end up with people with quite low support needs being serviced through a

high-cost model. So by getting that match of needs to model more effectively determined, we should be able to deliver a greater number of places.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is the department giving any consideration to a proposal by the management of the Carrington nursing home at Camden for a special accommodation facility for about 20 or 30 young people with disabilities inappropriately housed in aged care?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can you repeat the first part of the question?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is the department considering a proposal, which has been publicly floated, by Carrington nursing home at Camden for a small unit within Carrington nursing home for young people with disabilities?

Ms MILLIGAN: I can give you some information about that. We have had two discussions, two meetings, with Carrington. I think I am right in saying that Carrington nursing home currently has eight younger people with disabilities among its residents. So Carrington has had a longstanding interest in this issue of young people with disabilities. It came forward probably 18 months ago and said it was interested in being a player into the future in the way young people with very high level clinical care needs are supported.

We had some discussion about what that might mean. Carrington indicated that perhaps it had land in its ownership that could be used for this. We are certainly not considering any detailed or specific proposal at this time. I know that with the announcement of the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] initiative to move on a five-year program for this population, Carrington has expressed interest in talking again and being part of that program. I am not able to give you any more specific details.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Carrington is located some five kilometres out of Camden, which is not well serviced by public transport. I would have thought a proposal such as that being floated in the media would have the limitation of young people not actually moving out of nursing home accommodation; they would simply be in another wing in the same area. That would be my concern about it.

Ms MILLIGAN: One meeting I had was at their premises so I am aware of where they are located. As I said, if we were to look at a specific proposal, there would be a number of things that we would look at.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The answer I referred to earlier also stated:

Planning is currently under way to determine how the additional 50 supported accommodation places in 2006-07 targeting the general population will be allocated.

Are you able to give us any information about how that is now under way, and does that include any people currently in nursing homes moving into the general community?

Ms McALPINE: At the moment we are looking at a number of factors to balance, one of which is equity: What parts of the State historically have had an underprovision in supported accommodation places? We are looking at appropriate models of care and where we might be able to source non-government providers. We are in discussions with the regions at the moment to determine those factors. That 50 would not include the commitments we have at this time for young people in nursing homes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So that is over and above, that is different.

Ms McALPINE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: There is none outlined in the additional budget. Can you indicate how many young people in nursing homes will be moved into the community as a result of the COAG arrangements?

Ms MILLIGAN: Perhaps I can answer that question. The COAG proposal called for a five-year program from July. The population that is the target of this program, I think it is fair to say, does not have their needs well understood. They have been cared for by the Commonwealth Government, so we are just starting to understand that. Certainly we have in Stronger Together done some modelling of what we think we can provide by way of assistance. If I can just take a moment to describe this program.

The national program between jurisdictions is targeting the population of young people under 50 in nursing homes. The program has three separate components. The agreed purposes are, firstly, to relocate some of these young people from nursing homes into other support models; second, to divert young people who are clearly headed for nursing home placements because of lack of other suitable care; and, thirdly, the program acknowledges that there will be some young people who by choice or because of the level of their clinical care needs will remain in a nursing home environment. So, the program provides for disability support services to be provided to them in the nursing home setting. For example, it may be that they access or have built around them a program, some sort of recreational community access activity. So, the program has three components.

The third one is probably important in relation to the previous question about Carrington. The program acknowledges that some of these young people may well remain in nursing homes, and that is important. In Stronger Together we have attempted at the early stage of the program to model how many people will get assistance in each of those three components of the program. We are saying that in this current year we think the assistances will be about 20. Clearly, during the first 12 to 18 months the program will have a lot of resources in understanding this population of young people under 50, where they are and what their needs are, so the program ramps up very significantly in the third year. Nobody underestimates some of the challenges and the new thinking that will be required to support some of these young people—who do have, in some cases, extremely high support needs—in a different environment.

So, the program is suggesting 20 assistances will be provided in this current financial year. The agreement with the Commonwealth Government that is being negotiated has also acknowledged that and the targets set are to be renegotiated after the first 12 months. The parties acknowledge that we are all learning a little in this program. It is breaking some new ground. Yes, we will reach an agreement that has some target included but at the end of the 12 months we will look at those targets, given what we have learnt in the first 12 months.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: When you say in the first 12 months, is that the current financial year or the next one?

Ms MILLIGAN: The current financial year.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Am I right to presume there will be 20 young people from nursing homes relocated into the community, plus another 50 to the general community, is that right?

Ms MILLIGAN: In terms of the young people in nursing homes, 20 assistances, some in each of the categories. Diverting people from nursing home maybe the only option, providing disability type assistance to people who currently live there and some relocation. The numbers of people relocated in the first 12 months will be low simply because if someone needs a purpose-built accommodation model, that will not happen in the first 12 months, however, there are some young people in nursing homes whose families have indicated if they had higher levels of in-home support they would very much like them to come home. That assistance may well be able to be delivered in the first 12 months.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What is the most of the department spends on any one individual in a supported accommodation package?

Mr O'REILLY: We would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What is the future of the devolution program? What institutions are now scheduled to be next in that program?

Ms McALPINE: In Stronger Together there was an announcement around the Grosvenor Centre, that it could be redeveloped on site to provide two 10-bed permanent accommodation options and two five-bed respite options. Peat Island will be redeveloped into two components. One will be a village for older people with disabilities, and a second group will move into the community. Of course, that will be determined on people's age. Lachlan will also be redeveloped, and that will provide village-style accommodation on site, although where on site is still being negotiated with Health. That will be for people, primarily, with challenging behaviour. There is an amount of money in Stronger Together to facilitate us undertaking planning on the other remaining centres.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What is going to happen to the Marsden Centre then?

Ms McALPINE: That will be part of that planning yet to be done.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: With that redevelopment, does that mean all the current residents will stay there?

Ms McALPINE: As I indicated, there will be two options for Peat Island, one with an older persons village and one to go to the community for those younger people, so they will split. In Lachlan it is possible that one or two people might like to try another option, and we will facilitate that, but the bulk of them will stay on that site.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is it fair to say that the devolution is just going to be to another site?

Ms McALPINE: I think what we are doing is trying to find more appropriate options for people that meet people's needs. We are saying that Peats has a group that can move to the community and there is a group that are quite frail and older people, and we ought to have a model that is appropriate for them. I think we are developing a wider range of options for people.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Who owns the Peat Island site? Is it in the ownership of DADHC?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: So when everybody is relocated what is the proposal for what to do with it?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Mr O'Reilly can help you with that.

Mr O'REILLY: Once we move off Peat Island we will probably work with Commerce about the disposal of that site completely. There would be the normal arrangements through public tender or whatever for the sale.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are the arrangements for the relocation of the residents in any way financed by the sale of the site?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I do not think it is possible. We will not be in a position to answer that at this stage. The appropriate thing for us to say is we might get to the point where the level of planning is sufficient to give an answer to that question.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I notice the department seems to be increasingly opening up more facilities that it runs itself. What sort of direction does the department have for using the non-government sector? For example, the Productivity Commission is urging governments to divest themselves and it was once a policy of the department to divest itself from being operators and become more purchasers. Why it is the department opening new facilities that they operate themselves?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The New South Wales Government funds 750 non-government organisations, 100 local councils and 12 other government providers to deliver services under its programs. Last financial year, the value of these contracts was \$850 million. This financial year, Stronger Together, combined with other growth funding, will increase the value of contracts to

approximately \$940 million. The Government values the role that non-government organisations play in delivering services to older people, people with disabilities and their carers.

Stronger Together will focus on purchasing all our funded programs in ways that promote value for money and innovative approaches to delivering outcomes for people with disabilities and developing and implementing a disability sector work force plan. We will be investing in the non-government sector's capacity by injecting \$9.8 million over five years for skills development; boosting training for occupational health and safety in the disability sector, in partnership with WorkCover New South Wales, with one-off funds of \$500,000; investing \$100,000 in professional training in early intervention; and streamlining service contracts to offer greater flexibility to providers, while delivering and reporting on clear outcomes for people with disabilities.

The Government is aware that non-government organisations experience a number of financial pressures, particularly relating to wage costs and movements in operational costs, such as insurances and petrol. Indexation is paid to those services to fund them, as we have mentioned in previous answers to the Committee. The support to be provided to services funded through the home and community care program is being discussed currently with the Commonwealth. The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, as I said, is providing that 3.3 per cent indexing to secure the ongoing viability and capacity of those organisations. If you examine the total of the additional Stronger Together funding—Mr O'Reilly might be able to give me the precise figure—more than 60 per cent of the additional funding will be delivered by the non-government sector.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I do not mean to be difficult but you are not actually answering the question that I was interested in. It had previously been the policy of the department to be more purchasers rather than operators and it seems that you want to continue to be operators. Does that represent a change of policy and is there some reason why you have changed?

Mr O'REILLY: There has been no change in policy. Basically, whenever we have a new service we test the non-government sector first to see if there is an interest in running it. That policy remains. We want to build that sector and not necessarily the department to be a provider of services as well. We want to keep that at a level that is commensurate with what the families who are currently there are asking for. Every now and again a service provider asks us, because of the nature of the service or the nature of the care needs of the clients, to take over the program. We do look for other NGO organisations to run the service. If we can get someone we will. If not, we are the safety net. There is no change in policy.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: One of the things that prompted me to ask that is that you are shortly to open a new respite facility in Blair Athol in Campbelltown. I understand it will be operated by DADHC. I wondered why there were not expressions of interest by the local disability providers to provide the service of respite for teenagers in the area, because it appeared to be opened by DADHC. Is there some reason why it was not made available?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I will take the specific question on notice.

Ms MILLIGAN: By way of additional information, you may be aware that last year New South Wales signed an agreement with the Commonwealth Government for additional respite care for ageing carers. By the end of last year we had put out \$18 million over three years as the first initiative under that contract. All of those contracts were with non-government providers. Certainly in terms of a policy direction I think that reflects the thinking. The flexible respite additional capacity for ageing carers, the first funding decision, for \$18 million, was for non-government providers.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is it a fact that the new facility that is to be opened at Blair Athol in Campbelltown will be largely staffed by people from a property known as in Gibbs Street in Campbelltown and Georges Hall? If that is the case, what are you planning to do with the services that are currently provided at Georges Hall and Gibbs Street?

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

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: There was an incident at Anglesea respite facility at, I think, Bondi. I do not need to go into the details. One of the issues arising from it was that perhaps lack of

training and experience by staff may well have resulted in the injury that occurred to a young person. Have you given consideration to reviewing the policy to reduce the amount of supervision provided to staff when you restructured? At the time when you did that I supported it by not complaining but I must say that incident made me think that it might be prudent to enhance the level of supervision provided at facilities that house children at the very least where instead of a team leader looking after three they would have their own manager.

Ms McALPINE: Clearly, supervision in the group homes for young people is of concern to us and we regularly look at the rosters in homes and we do vary them. We will be looking at all children's rosters and ensuring that they are adequate to meet people's needs.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I suppose the difference with respite facilities is that they have a changing population, unlike other places that are group homes where the population is more fixed.

Ms McALPINE: But there are a set number of families that use a respite outlets, so it is not as if they are completely unknown to the respite—

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is there any possibility that you might restore the original arrangements at some places where it is justified to provide enhanced staff supervision?

Ms McALPINE: We will review them.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Before the break, I think in response to Mr Ryan's line of questioning, Mr O'Reilly spoke of the Business Improvement Unit. The major responsibility of the Business Improvement Unit is the co-ordination of change and implementation across the department. The Business Improvement Unit works with program areas and the regions to develop implementation places, facilitate senior management approvals of the same, monitor progress and implementation and take action as appropriate to progress performance. The Business Improvement Unit undertakes detailed analysis of data and modelling to inform decision-making about demand, allocation to places and equitable distribution of resources. The key functions of the Business Improvement Unit are strategic planning, performance monitoring and annual reporting. I put that on the record for the sake of clarity.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Minister, thank you for this report from Dougie Herd. I notice that at point 3 in the executive summary it states that Nardy House Committee should accept that the public commitments of the New South Wales Government's disability services Minister to provide recurrent funding for respite services at Nardy house do not automatically constitute a verbal agreement in the past or now to fund recurrently a proposal costed by the committee in the region of \$1 million annually. Does this effectively means that if you say that you are going to fund respite services you are not going to fund them at the level that is realistic or that what you say is not worth the words that are spoken? What does it mean?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think that recommendation reads as it is. You have taken it out to the point of adding the figure of \$1 million. Mr Herd's comments can be read as saying that we are prepared to fund Nardy House at the appropriate level of recurrent funding for Nardy House to operate as per the usual arrangements put in place by the agency consistent with all legislative requirements and other audit requirements of our funding. You mentioned the figure of \$1 million. In short, I think Mr Herd's recommendation can be best read as indicating that the request for a \$1 million funding package is not, as you put it, realistic.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am not saying that it is unrealistic. It would seem from my understanding of it that the overall cost of running five respite beds 24/7, \$1 million a year, is about the ballpark. I am not an expert but that seems the case.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am surrounded by them and they tell me differently.

Mr O'REILLY: It is well above the benchmark.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The Herd report suggests that some money for Nardy House would come across from the moneys allocated to respite care from the

Federal Government packages or from disability packages, is that not right? It is mentioned in the Herd report that there are moneys from Federal Government flexible respite and also from various settlements from people catastrophically injured in various insurance arrangements but some small private component. Would the Government fund the rest of the amount required rather than having a white elephant? Is that what is being envisaged?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No, I think it is a much simpler proposal than that. The Government has publicly suggested, based on Mr Herd's report and other information that has been publicly canvassed already, that Nardy House can commence operations based on existing State Government arrangements. It can access other arrangements accordingly. What is at issue—you keep repeating the figure \$1 million in recurrent funding—is the view that Nardy House requires \$1 million to commence operations providing effective respite for people in the Bega Valley.

That has been tested by the professionals in the agency and externally by Mr Herd and it has been canvassed with what could be otherwise thought of as the peers or potential mentors of Nardy House, other organisations that provide that kind of respite and it is simply not a realistic approach to the need to get Nardy House open. Nardy House could also access extra funds of the \$400,000 already suggested that is available under the existing New South Wales budget for respite. All those things indicate that there are more than adequate funds in existing programs for Nardy House to commence operations. If they were to agree on that today Nardy house could be operating providing respite for people within a month, I would suggest.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you saying that the \$1 million is the problem, that you would offer them \$400,000, that there are other sources funding that they might tap into and that they ought to be able to run it at that price?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think you are saying that \$1 million is the problem. I am saying there are existing funding streams and provisions under both Commonwealth and State programs, we have existing obligations under our legislation and any reasonable audit requirements in our funding arrangements and the amount of budget allocated for those purposes on a regional basis. I am suggesting—and I repeat it—that there is more than adequate funding based on Mr Herd's report and other information for Nardy House to commence operations. Regrettably, that has been the case for 12 months or more.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am not advocating the \$1 million. I mention it merely because it is bandied about in the literature. You referred to \$400,000 earlier this morning in response to Ms Robertson's question. Obviously that is a huge gap, and to say that some Federal, private or insurance funding will fill that gap is a daring statement.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think you are misunderstanding the discrepancy in the figures. As Mr O'Reilly said, the \$1 million for the operation of the Nardy House facility is well over the benchmark. The assumption that it needs to make up another few hundred thousand dollars to increase it to \$1 million is yours, not ours. Our view is that Nardy House can operate given the existing funds available. It is as simple as that. We cannot write a blank cheque.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am not suggesting you should. You referred to existing programs. Is that code for \$400,000? How much money is that code for?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It is not easy to estimate the exact amount. Certainly, \$400,000 is the approximate amount that is accessible under the current respite programs available in the Bega Valley.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you think you can have six full-time respite beds, 24/7 for 365 days a year for \$400,000?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: As Mr O'Reilly said, the \$1 million costing suggested is well over the benchmark.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What is the benchmark?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I will take that question on notice. I will also take the second part of the question on notice. You asked me to describe in detail—and I want to be precise in my response—the way in which the funds would be sourced to operate Nardy House. We are happy to provide that information, but I will take the question on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am interested in that because that is the challenge. If Nardy House management open the facility, they obviously have to assume that whatever you give them plus whatever they get from the insurance, Federal Government or private funds is sufficient to cover their costs, otherwise they are headed for early doom.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I do not want to speculate about being headed for doom. However, I do want to be clear about one point. The continued inference in your questioning is that there is something magic about the figure \$1 million, which you suggested is recurrent funding, to operate Nardy House under a specific set of management arrangements. That is not appropriate. If you were to read Dougie Herd's report in more detail, you would find that it suggests that to comply with the public requests of the Nardy House Committee it may be an arguable point that I would be in breach of the law as Minister. A number of complex issues arise about the opening of Nardy House. It simply boils down to the fact that Nardy House can be opened, certainly within a month of an agreement being reached. Frankly, the agreement relates to the existing respite provisions for the Bega Valley.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I do not think I am any more dedicated to the \$1 million than you are to the \$400,000. However, we can leave that point now.

Ms MILLS: I would like to make an additional comment. The source of the notion of \$1 million was the Nardy House Committee. No other source has suggested that is what is required to run the service; that is the number they put out. We have no service in New South Wales that runs 24/7 respite that cost us anything like \$1 million.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No, but it will be interesting to know your assessment of a reasonable top cost and how that would be funded.

Ms MILLS: There are two issues that the Minister has raised. The first issue is the actual cost of running a 24/7 model. The way we have suggested that Nardy House be run is as a facility accessing existing funds for program recipients in the present local area. It was never proposed to be a funding level on top of all current effort in Bega. It is meant to draw on some of the resources in Bega and offer them a new and modern facility that they can access, and have appropriate funding and administration to ensure that is possible.

CHAIR: Do Government members have any further questions?

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: No, so you might adjourn the Committee early for lunch.

CHAIR: I propose that the both the Opposition and the cross-bench members have 20 minutes to ask more questions.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I am happy to take that extra time.

CHAIR: If Government members do not have questions we will conclude at approximately 12.30 p.m. We will have one additional round of questions within the same time frame that honourable members would have had if Government members had wished to ask questions.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: With respect, the fact that the Government members waste a lot of time on Dorothy Dix questions does not mean that the general principle of four hours of questioning the Minister ought to be undermined.

CHAIR: That is so. However, unless you are going to dissent from my ruling, I have just indicated what will happen.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In a sense, I am dissenting.

CHAIR: No, you are not.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We have four hours for questions. The fact that the Government members waste time—

CHAIR: Are you really asking me to clear the room to discuss that issue?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: We do not have to have the discussion now. Perhaps we can do that at 12.30 p.m.

CHAIR: I will allow Opposition members 20 minutes for questions and I ask the honourable member to reflect on that situation over the next 20 minutes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Has the Government decided to take up an offer from an organisation called Disability Enterprises to purchase the Greystanes Centre at Leura to be used as a respite facility for people who used the facility for respite in the past?

Ms McALPINE: It is an old building and it would not be appropriate for respite. I understand they wish to use it for a day program.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What arrangements have been made for the people who used it for respite? There seemed to be a significant number of people who did not look like having an alternative centre-based service when it was closed.

Ms McALPINE: Of the 17 people who were using it for respite, three are in permanent accommodation and one is in a temporary foster care placement. Of the next three categories, some are using two types of service: Eight are using departmental respite, seven are using NGO respite or in-home supports, and one young person has had an operation is currently recuperating at Grosvenor.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are you saying there is no need for centre-based care to replace that?

Ms McALPINE: We are able to meet the needs of that group of clients.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Does that not mean that other people are missing out because they have moved into existing facilities?

Ms McALPINE: We are finding that we are able to provide adequate respite.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Has the State Advocacy and Information Plan been completed?

Ms MILLS: We have completed the directions we want to take for advocacy and information. We have consulted over an extended period about directions and we have a way forward with three distinct strategies for advocacy and respite. The first is to clarify the role of the peak or systemic advocacy bodies, the second is to have a strengthened focus on individual advocacy, and the third component is the provision of information. Future directions for information will be done last. The work will be done sequentially. The work on the systemic and peak body roles is under way at the moment. We are doing that as part of a broader whole of human service strategy around funding of peak bodies, clarification of what distinguishes a peak body from a service provider or an individual advocacy body, to modernise funding arrangements for them and to give clarity to the way forward for those current organisations.

The second phase will be the strengthened focus on individual advocacy. This was strongly supported in all of the consultations we have conducted and in the feedback we received from the discussion paper that we issued late in 2005. We have guaranteed all organisations funding until at least June of next year to allow that implementation to occur. On the third component around information, we are again working partly with other agencies that provide information services and partly in the disability sector to identify what role we have for disability information, given the significant changes in technology and funding arrangements from the Commonwealth and other

bodies in disability since the original funding models were implemented. We anticipate that all of those reforms would be in place by the end of the financial year to allow a staged progression of change as necessary.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: When you say they would be in place do you mean announced?

Ms MILLS: What I am saying is that we are negotiating with each of the component parts of the advocacy and information sector in sequence. We are working at the moment with the peak bodies. We have our first human services peak meeting on 19 September.. We would like to resolve those arrangements and those contracts first, then to do the individual advocacy contracts, and then to do information.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The peak bodies will get an idea of what you're directions are at that meeting, will they?

Ms MILLS: as common that will be one source of directions. They use the human service one, so it is more about: what do we expect of peaks and how do we improve our relationship and clarification of the roles of peaks? If you look historically at disability, an of organisations have been funded under several categories. We want to clear that up and the able to be confident about the role that each organisation is playing and what our expectations are from them for that funding..

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are there any plans to make the Office of Ageing any smaller??

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Can you be a bit more specific, please?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How many people work in the Office of Ageing?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Approximately 10.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are there any plans to reduce that number and restructure the office?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The answer is "no".

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Has the Council on the Ageing [COTA] requested a meeting with you, Minister, and have you told them that you will not meet with them, that it may only meet with Ms Mills?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I have met with the COTA on a number of occasions. In fact there are two organisations that are called COTA, as I understand it, and I have met members of both those organisations on a number of occasions. I would not say to any organisation that it may only meet with Ms Mills but, from time to time, given that as Minister I have quite a lot of responsibilities both in this agency and for some others, if I assess that it is probably most appropriate to meet with a senior departmental officer I have no hesitation in recommending that because it usually gets a better and more immediate results for the organisation, not out of any discourtesy to the organisation. Generally speaking, if the organisation insists on seeing me personally, eventually I find a way to do that. From a utility point of view it often works better in they see a senior officer of the agency.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Has the Office of Ageing done any work in contributing to the need to address the large numbers of elderly people who are waiting for public dental services? Have they provided you with any advise regard to that area?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: That is a health issue. I can only refer the honourable member to a very large public literature campaign and debate over the issue of public dental health and ageing. Obviously the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has an advocacy role and there is a ministerial advisory committee, which engages in a wide range of issues about ageing and older people.

Ms MILLS: The ministerial advisory committee has identified that as one of its areas of interest and has engaged in consultation around that, and has been developing some recommended strategies for government, recognising that is an area that falls within the health portfolio.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: When that eventually is produced all forthcoming it will be public information.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: What consultation have they undertaken so far in that regard?

Ms MILLS: The ministerial advisory committee conduct a series of public meetings each year and it does that across the State. It has the program of topic areas and runs one or two consultations in each location on those topic areas. That is the primary nature of the consultation. It invites and advertises widely to secure a cross-section of older people at the meetings. In areas where there are, for example, high indigenous populations, in addition to a general hearing it may conduct an indigenous specific hearing and it will pick out particular issues at each of those. In recent years, for example, in the rural areas it has conducted consultation around the availability of rural health services. It has done research and seminar work around the various aspects of healthy ageing. It has done work on things like safety and security in the home, et cetera. It is quite a scheduled program that the department conducts each 12 months.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: When does the Government proposed to release for consultation the New South Wales carers policy? What funds as your department set aside all committed for the implementation of a whole-of-government framework to assist and support carers in New South Wales?

Ms MILLS: The carers policy is primarily led by New South Wales Health. We have contributed to and continue to contribute to that initiative. We also fund an extensive range of services directly for carers in terms of our mainstream programs. In effect the benefits provided by respite, domestic assistance, personal care, case management, therapy et cetera all benefit carers either directly or indirectly, and those funds will continue to be allocated. We also have, under Strong It Together, a significant amount of money dedicated to supporting carers as well as the families of people with disability, as well as HACC carers. Under the carers program we will invest \$5.1 million this year to strengthen existing measures to support carers and provide better community access for carers.

There are a number of specific projects that DADHC leads under that \$5 million budget, which are jointly the responsibility of DADHC and Health. Those projects include the annual Carers Week each October, research into carers and employment, a training strategy for community care service providers on how to work with carers, and ongoing funding for the Innovative Young Carers project. Under the review, we are committed to continuing his level of effort and contributing to the Stronger Together strategy, in harmony with the New South Wales carers statement to ensure that there is expanded assistance for carers.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: You might remember that last year I asked a series of questions related to a trust fund that had been established as a result of the sale of the John Williams Centre. What has happened to the \$6 million that was held in trust?

Ms McALPINE: We have purchased two properties, one in Thornleigh, and I cannot remember the other northern suburb. They are currently being modified and we are in search now rather properties.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is all of the capital ultimately going to be devoted to the purchase of other respite facilities?

Ms McALPINE: For children.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are limited to the northern suburbs?

Ms McALPINE: No, we are not limited to the northern suburbs. The families whom were using the old John Williams building came from the northern and western suburbs, so we have replaced theirs first, but after that we can look for other areas.

Mr O'REILLY: Two suitable properties were identified, one in Thornleigh and one in Girraween. We completed the purchasing in May using funds from the sale of the John Williams property. Both houses will be used to provide respite services to former residents of the John Williams Centre as well as other individuals, in line with the terms of the trust. To date, over \$1.5 million has been spent on the purchase of the two properties. There are going to be additional costs incurred due to modification work. We are in the process of finalising the precise cost of these but it is anticipated that the work will be completed by November 2006. All the money from the sale of John Williams will be used to continue to provide respite services for children, in line with the terms of the charitable trust. We are currently searching for two additional properties in the metro north area, which were used as children's respite and purchased in the names of the trust.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could you provide the Committee with an update of what would be left in the trust once you have completed that work in November? You will probably have to take that question on notice.

Mr O'REILLY: Absolutely, yes.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: My colleague the member for Wagga Wagga specifically wanted me to ask you about why the situation occurred at Northcott where the facility at Northcott stopped taking clients who had high support needs? As I understand, the Government has now provided some funding to allow them to continue to do that. He was interested to find out why that occurred in the first place and what would be done to stop that from happening again.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The member for Wagga Wagga gets very good service out of myself and Mr O'Reilly, but Mr O'Reilly can provide some detail to that.

Mr O'REILLY: The Northcott Society in Wagga Wagga informed the parents of the withdrawal of respite care services for 10 younger people with severe to profound levels of intellectual disability and with very high support needs. Over the years they have expanded to what the terms of their funding arrangements were. It was supposed to be for people who had disabilities over a certain age and they expanded their services because there was a need. When we did the review of all the funding arrangements they realised they had expanded and thought, "I'll bring it back to line", and they informed the parents that, in line with the funding schedules and the agreements, that was the action to be taken.

When we found that out I spoke to the CEO of Northcott, who agreed that it was important that we did not just close the door on these people with their obvious needs. We negotiated an arrangement that they will keep going until June 2007, which will give both Northcott and us time to be able to sort through another respite provision, if that need arises.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: How is it that a non-government organisation is able to start telling the Government what they will spend their funding on?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think that is in fact the very point: we do not tolerate that approach, but we obviously have to be reasonable because major non-government organisations make a big contribution to the sector. I just wanted to make sure there was no confusion and no acceptance of the proposition you put to the Committee then. We do not accept the view that non-government organisations should dictate policy, and that is part of the point of some of the issues that arise from time to time. But we are very reasonable and consult with them.

Mr O'REILLY: I think basically what happened was when we did the complete review of all the service description schedules that we have with each organisation, at the local level they realised that they had actually been providing services outside of that service description schedule, and then thought, "We need to bring it back because DADHC is asking, 'Are you in line with your service description schedule?'" Unfortunately, when they decided to bring it back it was just a matter

of communication at the local level, I think, that happened and, unfortunately, the families were obviously the ones affected.

As soon as we heard about it, Glenn Gardner, the CEO at Northcott, was very quick to co-operate and come to an arrangement: we can keep the service running. But there is a basic issue about younger kids being with older adults, some of whom have different varying needs. So that is being worked through very carefully. The rosters have changed so that we will be able to keep the service running so no one is disadvantaged whilst we have time to go through a different model.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is it fair to say that the original service agreement, whatever it was, did not include the respite it was providing and they were bringing it back to what the department originally asked them for?

Mr O'REILLY: Yes, and I think they were supplementing through their own budgets, through their expanding of services. I think as we have introduced this monitoring program and the review of the service description schedules we are getting those things sorted out.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I recently asked a question with regard to blocked beds in respite facilities and I was informed that figures were only available to a particular month. Are you able to provide the Committee with more up-to-date information on blocked beds?

Ms McALPINE: We have them up until June, and there are 57.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am not sure you will be able to provide the answers to the next series of questions I want to ask with regard to supported accommodation. I am happy to accept that you will take them on notice, but in order to make sure there is clarity in what I am asking I would like to ask them in committee. Could you explain to the Committee how many supported accommodation vacancies have occurred within the system in each region during the year 2005-06? How many applicants have applied for supported accommodation places in each region during 2005-06?

Ms McALPINE: I have the numbers as totals. I can give you the totals and take a regional breakdown of the question on notice. There were 96 vacancies occurred. There are 1,339 people registered with us on the accommodation register. We looked at 289 people who could possibly be matched to those vacancies and we have placed 79.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could you provide to the Committee the number of supported accommodation places that we have in New South Wales in total and give details of how they are distributed within each region? Again, I expect you might have to take that question on notice.

Ms McALPINE: I can give you the global picture, but the regional breakdown I would have to take on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Could you also provide a description as to how many of those places are operated by the government and then by non-government organisations?

Ms McALPINE: If I can just give you a total to give you a flavour? There are 4,000 group home places and of those 4,000, 621 are in the non-government sector and 1,379 are in the government sector.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: With regard to Anglesea respite facility, I do not know whether any of you have seen it, but when I stood outside it, there looks to be a remarkable drop from the front door to the footpath. I wondered if anything was being done about it, particularly given that some of your clients are children and somewhat hard to supervise, and in wheelchairs. It did not appear very safe to me.

Ms McALPINE: We have got flat access from the back, if you had gone around the back. That is the access that is used.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I am more worried about a child opening the door and exploring the front.

Ms McALPINE: We are looking at replacing that property.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: The Leader of the Opposition—and, I must say, I had no idea he was doing this—asked to go and look at some respite facilities himself because he wanted to see some. He wanted to do it in the company of some parents who wanted him to see them. I notice that the Premier went and visited the respite facility at which my wife works, and there was no problem with him visiting that. Is there any real reason why the Leader of the Opposition cannot visit respite facilities in his own electorate and a couple of others, if he attends with the parents who want to show them to him? Or is there one rule for the Opposition and another one for the Premier?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think it is fair to say that there are rules and they do operate for a very good reason. In working with people with disabilities we seek to maximise family relationships, independence, dignity, opportunity and privacy. Family and friends are always encouraged to participate in the services we provide, including those services that are not open to the public. The services Mr Debnam is seeking to visit provide respite care to children in a homelike, child-friendly environment. The services substitute for family care and enable families to have a break.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: As does the Sunflower Cottage.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: For this reason they are not generally open to the public. I have instead offered a briefing to Mr Debnam about any issues related to the services or any other disability service in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government spends more than any other State or Territory on these services, and I think that is something that both yourself and Mr Debnam are conscious of. Like you do not follow Mr Debnam around and are not responsible for all of his movements, I do not follow the Premier around and I am not responsible for all of his movements, but my advice is that the Premier has only been to public areas of disability facilities. At the time I was unaware that Mr Debnam's submission included being accompanied by the relevant families. Whether that was a misunderstanding at the time, that is a piece of information that is new to me as of your question.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Is there any objection to Mr Debnam visiting respite facilities to look at what they physically look like, provided that he looks at public areas?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Mr O'Reilly and I would be very happy to talk to the Leader of the Opposition about that.

CHAIR: Dr Chesterfield-Evans, I understand that you have an additional 10 minutes from the Greens, so you now have 20 minutes.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Speaking of access, to take up the point of the Hon. John Ryan, I have been actively excluded from health facilities, even the public areas?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: You are a member of the public.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes, but as a member of the public I was actively discriminated against because I was a member of Parliament who actually attempted to walk into a health facility. Is this likely to happen in other facilities? To what extent do members of Parliament have the right to go into these sorts of facilities? If is a photo opportunity for the Minister or the Premier, it is fine, but if anyone else wants to find out anything else, it is not.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Let me just explain the principles that we apply. I have never visited either a DADHC facility or a DADHC-funded non-government facility without expressly speaking to both the staff and the persons in the facility and securing their agreement. Sometimes people have high levels of disability and there are issues around their vulnerability. I am conscious of that as Minister. It is important, as Minister, I visit these facilities—and I do reasonably

regularly. We always take great care to be sensitive about that because these are not health facilities. The New South Wales Government, along with most jurisdictions in the Western world, has followed the notion of devolution.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Minister, will you guarantee—

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am answering the question.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No, you are waffling on.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: —which means that what we are doing is providing this support in a family or home-like environment to the best of our ability. That means that frankly, no, it is not a good idea for any member of Parliament or, for that matter, Ministers or Premiers just to be blundering into people's houses making statements, demanding photos be taken or anything else. If I have ever had a photo taken with anybody with the disability in a service or out of it, I have always asked their permission and explained to them what the photo might be used for.

To the best of my knowledge, Madam Chair, Dr Chesterfield-Evans has not requested my office or the department to visit any DADHC facility and, again, I extend to him the same courtesies as the Leader of the Opposition. Mr O'Reilly and I will be happy to talk about that, but again we would restrict that to the publicly available areas. That seems to me to be appropriate.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I have visited some of these facilities; perhaps it was under the previous Minister.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am tougher.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I have not ever visited a facility without taking due account. I think you are setting up a straw man that we are going to blunder in, unannounced, with thousands of photographers. That is really not the point. It seems the main thing involved in this is abject terror from the people who run these facilities that the Minister will not be happy or will not give permission. That seems to be the ethos, in my experience.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Can I make a point of explanation: My understanding was that Mr Debnam also asked to visit without the media. He meant for them to be private visits where he would just see the facility.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Let me get to the point: When will a State review of advocacy services be complete and will the outcomes of the review be shared? What budget will be provided for the New South Wales advocacy program and will there be any growth money for existing and new services in the next financial year?

Ms MILLS: I have already answered most of that question in terms of the three stages of the advocacy reform. The budget for this year is the equivalent of last year's, plus indexation.

Ms MILLIGAN: It is \$6.8 million plus indexation. The funding goes to 38 organisations, which provide 64 separate services.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What stage is the Youth and Community Services Act review at and when will submissions be made available?

Ms MILLIGAN: There was an answer earlier in the session regarding boarding-house reform where the Minister talked about directions in boarding-house reform, including some initiatives to work with local government about application for general standards and the investigation of occupancy rights. That work has fairly significant implications for the review of the Youth and Community Services Act in that some of the standards defined there and some of the protection that would be afforded under such legislation have implications for what we do in the Youth and Community Services Act. The review of the Youth and Community Services Act is part of initiatives to reform boarding-houses, so the work is ongoing but it is happening in tandem with some of the broader work in considering standards in the boarding-house sector more generally.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Do you also have targets for young people coming out of nursing homes?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We have already answered that question.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Are you introducing an updated Youth and Community Services Act this session?

CHAIR: It is not your time for questions.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I accept that question as my question.

Ms MILLS: Not this session, no.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Further to the inquiries of the Hon. John Ryan and the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans about visits and the appropriateness of parliamentary scrutiny, I indicate that obviously the offer stands that we would discuss individual members of Parliament or leaders about these matters, but I make the general point for the benefit of the Committee that the Ombudsman's Office has a community visitors program which is ruthlessly independent. Its function, given its professionalism and background, is to independently visit these facilities and make sure there is independent scrutiny. I do not think it is necessarily something that falls under the general category of a requirement for particular parliamentary scrutiny of the immediate operations of those places when there is a program like the community visitors program available.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Are you suggesting that while there is a community visitors program available under the Ombudsman and you are more than happy to brief us, that members of Parliament should not visit these facilities and become personally aware of what is going on?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I think I indicated to the Hon. John Ryan that I was very happy for Mr O'Reilly and/or me to meet with Mr Debnam, you or any other member of Parliament to talk about the issues involved in any particular visit to a site and what areas of a site might be most appropriate for you to visit. I cannot take the point any further than that.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It is suspiciously like censorship to me.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No, I make the point that there is a vigorous program of community visitation conducted by independent persons.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: As opposed to parliamentarians seeing the facilities for themselves.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I must say, Minister, that most non-government agencies welcome a visit from a member of Parliament and are thrilled to bits to show us their facilities. The government-owned ones seem to operate in a cloud of secrecy that befuddles me.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I must say that I do rather resent the implication that we will traipse through with cameras in total indifference to the residents, which seems to be what you are implying by your highly protective attitude, which does seem a little convenient.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Well, I meant no disrespect. I was simply making some hyperbole.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: How many of the 1,000 new beds touted by the Stronger Together five-year plan have been earmarked for accommodation and support for people with disabilities being released from custody care?

Ms McALPINE: Over the five years there will be 200.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What about accommodation and support for people with disabilities moving away from foster care?

Ms McALPINE: There will be 450.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Accommodation and support for people with disabilities currently residing with ageing unpaid carers who are seeking to terminate their 24-hour a day care role?

Ms McALPINE: I think it is 340.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: How many of the people we have just talked about have mild and moderate activity limitations?

Ms McALPINE: I am unable to tell you that at this stage.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: But you could take that on notice?

Ms McALPINE: We do not know who is actually going to go into all of those beds at this stage. This is a five-year program, so I cannot describe who might be in year five.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: It would not be possible to answer that question.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: You presumably cannot tell me how many of them are from the severe to profound activity limitation?

Ms McALPINE: No, not for the full 990.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: How many unpaid carers are currently accessing aged care services for their own age-related disabilities while still supporting their ageing disabled sons and daughters?

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

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: How many unpaid primary carers in New South Wales co-residing with their sons and daughters where the carer falls into different age brackets?

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

Ms MILLS: The primary source of that information would be the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of the census. We would not hold any specific DADHC data on those kinds of profiles.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It was pointed out by the person who asked the question that she cannot afford the ABS fees to get the data. I will still put the question on notice.

Ms MILLS: I was not suggesting that we would not provide it. I am saying that it is not DADHC-specific data.

Ms MILLIGAN: Previously you asked about carers accessing aged care services while caring for a member of the family with a disability. Clearly there are people using HACC services like domestic assistance or who are receiving personal care assistance for the member of the family. So there is assistance to them as carers. Is that what you are asking about or is it something a little different?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: That is what I am asking about. Obviously, these are people who are barely able to ask for themselves. They have a dependent child and obviously they are against the wall, in a sense.

Ms MILLIGAN: The fact that people use home and community care services does not mean that they are having difficulty coping themselves. The Home and Community Care Program provides assistance—

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: No, for their own. I take your point that they may be getting home and community care services for their sibling but I am talking about for themselves, their own age-related disabilities.

Ms MILLIGAN: So you are still interested to know the number of people with someone in the household with a disability who might be using delivered meal services, for example.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Who have their own age-related disabilities, yes. How much money will DADHC spend on monitoring the conformity of DADHC provided and funded disability services with the requirements of the Disability Services Act, and what is the breakdown of that spending?

Ms MILLS: We will have to take that on notice. The monitoring processes are internal; DADHC has staff dedicated to that role.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: So there is not independent monitoring?

Ms MILLS: The monitoring process is run in house, that is correct.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Would it not be better to have independent monitoring by a university body or some other body?

Ms MILLS: If there were an alternative it would not be an academic process; it would be something around a regulation model. That might be a human service cross field one. You will find in New South Wales that virtually all the agencies that provide funding in human services also do their own monitoring. That is part of the core role of being an individual purchaser. As the Hon. John Ryan said earlier, one of the department's core functions in terms of being an effective purchaser is knowing what it is purchasing by monitoring it closely.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: With disabled elements of the department's capacity, I think it would be inappropriate.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Given that the department is a fairly significant provider, it is almost a self-regulatory system.

Ms MILLS: We have distinct roles. As I said, we have dedicated staff whose role is quite different to the service provision role, and the organisation is structured to separate out those responsibilities.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: I note that the number of hours of home care service provided dropped dramatically in 2003-04—this is in Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 5-50—and recovered only marginally last year, and this year is still below the 2003-04 levels of service in terms of hours provided. Why is this, and how can this possibly be meeting a rising demand?

Ms McALPINE: The home care service delivered 3.626 million hours of service in 2005-06. That was about 2 per cent less than anticipated and there were a range of reasons, take-up time between referral and assessment and commencement of service, and slow replacement rates, people reaching domestic assistance and it was actually personal care hours or vice versa that was available. There was a range of reasons.

Mr O'REILLY: I think you might recall that in the year you mention there was a significant overspend against the budget. We brought the budget back in on line but the underspend can also be as a result of people having moved out of their home into hospital for a while so the service hours dropped as well.

Ms MILLIGAN: If I could add more information. Mr O'Reilly is correct that there was a significant overspend by home care in the base year, 2003-04. Part of that was related to the non-sign up of the HACC plan in the previous year. We were in a period where there was a significant delay in the release of new money because of the non-sign up of the HACC plan. It meant that new money that we would have expected to see flow into the system was held up.

I guess there was an allowance that home care, as the government provider, needed to pick up some of that non-discretionary demand and it did overspend its budget in that year. When the plan was signed new money was released and other providers were brought on line. So to compare their hours with that 2003-04 year which was abnormal, I think for some very good reasons, given that the normal growth in the program was held up and home care picked up the slack, it is difficult to use that as your base year to compare subsequent performance.

Mr O'REILLY: The important part is that those funds were not lost. Any underspend gets rolled over.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If you take your point about the base year and go back to the year before, 2002-03, we still have not reached it either. If you look at 2003-04 compared to 2002-03, the progression there is only a slight increase. To say that 2003-04 is an abnormal year is not consistent with the figures in the last year's budget papers. You still have not reached 2002-03.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: If the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans is not happy with the explanation given so far, I think we should take this question and the likely subsequent one on notice.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: What measures will you take to ensure that service hours targets are met in 2006-07 if they are often not meeting their target of hours?

Ms McALPINE: We have introduced improvements at the regional assessment centre. There are more assessors on line. We have streamlined that process so that we can get people on as quickly as possible.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: There is no mention of Aboriginal home care, which the New South Wales Audit Office reported as a separate business stream. Why is that?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: No mention where?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: In the budget papers. Can you tell us about Aboriginal home care and what happened to it?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The New South Wales Government has responded to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a range of programs conducted by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and by building the department's capacity to respond to their needs. In 2004-05, 6,298 or 3.4 per cent of people receiving home and community care services and 1,053 or 3.7 per cent of people in New South Wales receiving disability services funded under the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement were from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

The New South Wales Government funds more than 65 specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, in addition to eight Aboriginal home care branches and 23 Aboriginal service outlets that continue to offer a range of flexible services. The branches and outlets are located primarily in rural and regional areas of New South Wales and provide a range of flexible and responsive programs.

During the last financial year two Aboriginal branches provided services to 2,139 people, consisting of a total of 211,611 service hours, 1,167 trips and 1,056 meals.

The New South Wales Government has also provided funding of \$150,000 to people with disabilities in New South Wales to allow them to auspice the New South Wales Aboriginal disability network to assist in identifying the key issues and challenges facing Aboriginal people with a disability. It is anticipated that the network will be fully operational in the first quarter of 2007, and will provide an avenue to increase our knowledge and awareness of the issues and challenges of young Aboriginal people with a disability.

The Aboriginal policy framework and Aboriginal consultation strategy, consulting effectively Aboriginal people and communities, were developed in the past financial year to improve the capacity of the department to identify and respond to the needs of Aboriginal communities. It has been a critical part of Stronger Together to ensure that the disability services system is as responsive as practicable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. That has been identified as something we will be doing better as a result of Stronger Together. I suggest, Dr Chesterfield-Evans, the reason it is not shown separately is an acquittal reason, given that the funds, at least in part, are sourced federally.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Minister, the total actual expenditure on supported accommodation for DADHC for 2005-06 was reported as \$860,000 but the budgetary amount was \$831,000, which is an overspend of \$29,676. You have been overspending for a while in that area. Will you compensate for that overspend as well, and where will the funds come from?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: How much was that overspend?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: It was \$29,676.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Out of?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Out of \$831,000—millions, is it, \$831 million?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: We have already answered that question during Mr Ryan's questions.

CHAIR: Dr Chesterfield-Evans, your time for questions has expired. Are you willing to put additional questions you have on notice?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: If I could just ask one on the boarding house strategy.

CHAIR: You can ask one.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: The boarding house strategy is funded from which line item in the budget?

Mr MUDGE: It is funded from grants and subsidies.

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Has that all been allocated?

Mr MUDGE: The boarding house?

The Hon. Dr ARTHUR CHESTERFIELD-EVANS: Yes.

Mr MUDGE: There is a full budget for the boarding house funds that are recurrent liabilities we have in the existing system.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: Ms McAlpine, you were answering some questions from Dr Chesterfield-Evans and you were giving a list of supported accommodation places in Stronger Together according to a category, and I think there were 204 people coming from Corrective Services

and 344 Aged Carers, and so on. Are you able to tell us what happened to the categories in the rest of the provision?

Ms McALPINE: There were three. There were 450 children leaving DOCS care when they are 18; 200 in the criminal justice sector and 340 in the third group.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.
