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GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 5

Friday 18 September 2009

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

HOUSING, WESTERN SYDNEY

The Committee met at 4.30 p.m.

MEMBERS

The Hon. R. L. Brown (Acting Chair)

The Hon. J. Ajaka
Ms S. P. Hale
The Hon. G. S. Pearce

The Hon. I. W. West
The Hon. H. Westwood
The Hon. L. Voltz

PRESENT

The Hon. D. L. Borger, *Minister for Housing, and Minister for Western Sydney*

Communities New South Wales
Ms Carol Mills, *Director-General*

Department of Housing
Mr M. Allen, *Director General*

Office of the Minister for Western Sydney
Ms J. Moxon, *Deputy Regional Coordinator*

Sydney Olympic Park Authority
Mr A. Marsh, *Chief Executive Officer*
Mr N. Hubble, *General Manager*

Western Sydney Parklands Trust
Ms S. Fitzgerald, *Director*

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

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

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

ACTING-CHAIR: In the absence of the Chair and Deputy-Chair, I have been nominated to chair this hearing. I declare this hearing for the inquiry into budget estimates 2009-10 open to the public. I welcome Minister Borger and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of Housing, and Western Sydney. Before we commence, I will make some comments about procedural matters.

In accordance with the Legislative Council's guidelines on the broadcast 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 this Committee, you must take responsibility for what you publish or what interpretation you place on anything that is said before the Committee. The guidelines on the broadcast of proceedings are available on the table by the door.

Any messages from the attendees in the public gallery should be delivered through the Chamber and support staff or the Committee clerks. Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and to refer directly to your advisers while at the table. I remind everyone to please turn off their mobile phones as they interfere with Hansard's equipment.

There is only one portfolio, so the inquiry will proceed straight through. Minister, the House has resolved that answers to questions on notice must be provided within 21 days, or as otherwise determined by the Committee. The Committee has not varied the 21-day time frame and asks that answers to questions on notice be provided within that 21-daily period.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I am sorry, but there is more than one portfolio. There is Western Sydney, Sydney Olympic Park, and Western Sydney Parklands.

ACTING-CHAIR: If you are happy to do so, we will examine them all together.

Mr DAVID BORGER: Sure.

ACTING-CHAIR: Minister, transcripts of this hearing will be available on the web tomorrow morning. All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn, as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament.

SUELLEN FITZGERALD, Director, Western Sydney Parklands Trust,

JANE MOXON, Deputy Regional Coordinator, Office of the Minister for Western Sydney, and

CAROL MILLS, Director General, Communities New South Wales, affirmed and examined:

MIKE ALLEN, Chief Executive, Housing New South Wales, Department of Human Services and Acting Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Office,

ALAN MARSH, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Olympic Park Authority, and

NICK HUBBLE, General Manager, Sydney Olympic Park Authority, sworn and examined:

ACTING-CHAIR: As there is no provision for the Minister to make an opening statement before the Committee commences questioning, we will begin with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Minister, when did Dennis Ferguson move into the Housing New South Wales townhouse in Ryde?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Mr Ferguson moved into the townhouse approximately two weeks ago. It was around the beginning of September—I think the second.

Mr ALLEN: That is right.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did the department assist him in moving him?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I will ask the Chief Executive Officer of Housing New South Wales to provide you with an answer to that question.

Mr ALLEN: There is a support provider in place who provided assistance to Mr Ferguson. I am not entirely clear whether that assistance was provided to him to move in, but certainly assistance has been provided.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Somebody was allocated to assist him?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct. There are support-provider arrangements in place for him.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Would that have included, for example, paying for his removal costs—his furniture and whatever?

Mr ALLEN: I am sorry, I do not have that information. I am happy to take it as a question on notice.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was Housing New South Wales aware of Mr Ferguson's previous convictions?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Firstly, I think it is fair to say that there is an investigation that is being undertaken into the allocation of a Housing New South Wales dwelling to Mr Ferguson. I will invite the chief executive officer to add detail on any of these questions, but there is an investigation that is underway.

Mr ALLEN: The answer to the question is yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You were aware of his convictions?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How did you become aware of those convictions?

Mr ALLEN: I am sorry, I am not aware of the precise circumstances of how we became aware, but I am clear that we are aware that that information was made available to us.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Could you take it on notice as well, thank you?

Mr ALLEN: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was Housing New South Wales aware of Mr Ferguson's requirement to notify Queensland Police of any change of address?

Mr ALLEN: Housing New South Wales was aware of Mr Ferguson's requirements to comply with the appropriate registration situation for someone with his record, yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Does the assistance you provided to him help them do that or not?

Mr ALLEN: No. That is something that he separately organises with the appropriate registration authorities, the police.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was he previously a tenant in other public housing in New South Wales?

Mr ALLEN: Not to my knowledge, no.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was he previously provided with accommodation by Housing New South Wales?

Mr ALLEN: Not direct public housing, no. Some financial assistance was provided for temporary accommodation.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How much was that and for how long?

Mr ALLEN: I am not aware of the precise cost but I can take that as a question on notice. It was for approximately two weeks.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Two weeks.

Mr ALLEN: Approximately, to the best of my recollection.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you know the venue where he stayed?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, in was an inner-city hotel.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was it the Hyde Park Plaza?

Mr ALLEN: I believe that may be the case, yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you have a special arrangement with the Hyde Park Plaza or would you have been paying normal rates?

Mr ALLEN: We do not have a special arrangement with that particular hotel. I am not sure whether we paid normal rates. I presume that that would be the case.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What was the process for finding housing for Mr Ferguson? I assume he was not on a waiting list.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I think earlier I indicated there is an investigation underway, so we will take that question on notice and provide you with an answer within the required period of time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was he on a waiting list?

Mr DAVID BORGER: In relation to that, as I have said, there is an investigation going on at the moment. We want to make sure we get the most accurate information, so we will take that question on notice and give you an answer within the required time frame.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I would expect that Mr Allen could at least tell me whether he was on a waiting list or there was some other process.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I think I have answered that question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So you are saying that this whole week has gone by and you will have an investigation but Mr Allen has not even worked out these basic questions.

Mr DAVID BORGER: No. I have said that it is very important that we provide accurate information. There is an investigation underway. We want to make sure that the most accurate information is provided. So that will be taken on notice and we will get an answer within the required period.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So after this whole week you cannot tell me whether he was on a waiting list.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I cannot answer.

ACTING-CHAIR: The Minister has answered the question. The Hon. Greg Pearce will move on.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I would like Mr Allen to answer the question, too.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I have answered the question. I think Mr Allen's answer is the same.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am putting a question to Mr Allen as the head of the department, that is, what was the process for allocating housing?

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: The Minister has answered on behalf of the department. I think the Hon. Greg Pearce should move on to the next question.

ACTING-CHAIR: I agree. The Hon. Greg Pearce will move on to the next question.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So you have taken those two questions on notice?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did Mr Ferguson complete a locational needs assessment form?

Mr ALLEN: I am not sure whether he did or did not. I will have to take that as a question on notice.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you know whether he requested a preference for any particular location?

Mr ALLEN: No. Again, I am sorry, I am not aware as to whether he expressed a preference for a particular location.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Who processed his application?

Mr DAVID BORGER: That is also subject to the investigation that is being undertaken at the moment. As soon as that investigation is available the information will be provided to the Committee within the required timeframe.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Was he processed as a special case? Is that what happened?

Mr ALLEN: Mr Ferguson met all the normal eligibility criteria for assistance and was processed through what is the normal process for people to have their eligibility assessed.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did he receive a preference? Was he moved forward in the queue?

Mr ALLEN: Mr Ferguson received the assistance for which his eligibility was assessed—nothing more, nothing less.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: What we are trying to understand is this. You may be aware that in July 2008 the former Premier, Morris Iemma, said that Dennis Ferguson would not be welcome. I specifically quote, "I wouldn't welcome a person like that in New South Wales at all." The former Premier promised that, "what action we have at law to stop Ferguson moving forward will be looked into". So we have a situation of a former Premier saying basically that he would do everything he can to make sure this person does not even come to New South Wales; he does not want him in New South Wales. Then the people of New South Wales suddenly hear that, in effect, we put out the red carpet by offering him free housing, we take care of his needs, we are looking after him. We have somehow put him to the top of the list when thousands of people are waiting for housing assistance. You can appreciate our concerns and why my colleague has been asking these questions. How could this possibly happen in New South Wales?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Obviously we can answer questions that relate to the housing portfolio. My understanding is that Mr Ferguson met the normal residency requirements, and that is generally that someone has lived within New South Wales for a period of approximately six months. I think the Chief Executive Officer answered earlier that he met the normal requirements for housing within that priority scheme. Beyond that, an investigation is underway, and we are happy to take questions on notice of a detailed nature.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Looking at your department's policies, was it appropriate to place Ferguson in the actual area he was placed, near schools, children and families? The specific location appears to be a major concern, in particular when the parents of those children in the schools are in no way given prior notice that he is even there.

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I have said on previous occasions, no, I do not believe this is an appropriate location. My understanding is that Housing New South Wales officials applied the standard internal guidelines that they would utilise to make that allocation decision. It met those technical guidelines, but I do not think that is good enough. As I have said on a number of occasions, I do not believe this is an appropriate location. However, we obviously have a challenge for the entire community for people like Mr Ferguson because they have to live in some place. Frankly, as I have said before, I think the concept of them wandering around the streets of Sydney would be a worse outcome because it would be very difficult for the police to know, for example, where people like Mr Ferguson are.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Will you publicly release the full investigative report as soon as it comes out?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We are working on that investigation at the moment. Any questions that this Committee asks, we will either answer today or take on notice.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Will you release the report as soon as it comes out?

Mr DAVID BORGER: The information in the report, I am certain will be released, and I will leave it at that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What is the term of Mr Ferguson's lease?

Mr DAVID BORGER: It is a standard lease for someone entering social housing. My understanding is that generally the lease period is approximately five years. It is reviewed after about two years. Is that correct?

Mr ALLEN: We can take it as a question on notice. I understand that it is a five-year term for his lease.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Obviously, given what has happened, there is no provision for relocation of the tenant in that lease?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We are obviously obliged to work within the residential tenancies legislation of New South Wales. Tenancy agreements must be consistent with the overarching legislation.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr Allen, prior to the Minister's press conference on Monday what advice did you give on the ability to relocate Mr Ferguson?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Can you repeat the question?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Prior to the press conference what advice were you given concerning the department's power to relocate Mr Ferguson?

Mr DAVID BORGER: My understanding is that under the Residential Tenancies Act and the lease agreement the power to relocate Mr Ferguson is a voluntary one, that is, he needs to consent to that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So when you went to that press conference you knew that you did not have the power to move on?

Mr DAVID BORGER: What I said at the media conference was that I had asked Housing New South Wales officials to do whatever they could to move him from those premises as soon as possible. Equally, the early advice I had received through Wesley Mission was that Mr Ferguson was prepared to move by that night. I was pleased about that and very happy to be getting on with that move. Obviously that did not happen, and that is unfortunate. We are doing everything we possibly can to ensure a more permanent place of accommodation outside the north Ryde precinct.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: If Mr Ferguson relocates to the Ryde townhouse, what will you do for neighbours who are not happy to have him living there?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As we have said before, our intention is to ensure that Mr Ferguson does not go back to the north Ryde town house. Equally, there is a valid lease agreement and all the conditions that flow from that obviously are there.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Are you compensating him at the moment for not being able to use the property?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I have said before, compensation has not been discussed. No compensation has been offered.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Is the Government paying his alternate accommodation costs?

Mr DAVID BORGER: My understanding is that we fund the provider that funds accommodation that he is with.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Sorry, you fund the organisation?

Mr DAVID BORGER: The answer is yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Have you allocated any funds to relocate neighbours who may not want to stay in the Ryde town house complex?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I understand it, Housing NSW visited the residents of the complex to check on their welfare and wellbeing during this very difficult time and offered them what is standard practice in situations where there is major disruption, and that is a temporary alternative [TA] if they saw fit. I understand one person took up that offer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How much is that offer worth?

Mr ALLEN: I will have to take that question on notice. I do not know; it would be whatever the cost of the temporary alternative accommodation would be, and generally that is into a hotel or motel style accommodation at the usual room rates.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: The department funded Mr Ferguson's initial stay at the Hyatt. It also funds his current unit in which he is not staying presently and it funds his current temporary stay. In a sense the funding cost has been increased for Mr Ferguson while others are waiting for assistance.

Mr DAVID BORGER: We have not funded any accommodation at the Hyatt. Yes, we are obviously funding the temporary accommodation.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: It was Hyde Park Plaza. Who paid for the costs at the Hyde Park Plaza for the first couple of weeks as mentioned by Mr Allen? I took it that your department funded it.

Mr ALLEN: Housing NSW did fund a couple of weeks of the stay but that is all.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: How many people are currently on the waiting list for housing assistance with your department?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Approximately 39,000 people are on the waiting list in New South Wales at the moment. I will get the exact figures for that. It is down 14 per cent from 31 December 2006 when there were 45,830 applicants on the register. It is down 60 per cent from June 2000 when there were 98,337 applicants on the register.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: In a worst-case scenario for the person number 39,000, what is the realistic period that person is looking at to obtain assisted accommodation? Is it one, two or three years?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Firstly, there are two streams of processing applicants on the housing register. The first is that some people qualify for priority housing, generally people that are at risk of homelessness who may have come from a crisis accommodation facility, it may be a woman escaping domestic violence with children who have come from crisis accommodation facility, it could be a person over the age of 80 years or a person who is undergoing a great illness. In those circumstances the waiting times vary but generally they are relatively short waiting times for those priority applicants.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: What about non-priority?

Mr DAVID BORGER: In terms of non-priority it really depends on the neighbourhood or the suburb within Sydney. In some country areas the waiting time is relatively short. In many urban areas of Sydney it is much longer, and it has become far longer because of the cuts of \$1 billion made by the Howard Government to public housing over more than a decade in New South Wales.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Do you seriously say that somehow or other Mr Ferguson had priority over each and every one of those 39,000 people?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Mr Ferguson complied with the general guidelines that are applied to house people in social housing—that has been said before.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Minister, when did you first inform the Premier or his office of the problem at Ryde?

Mr DAVID BORGER: My understanding is it was on Monday, but I will take that on notice and check that there were not any messages from my staff that were made at an earlier time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Before your press conference?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Yes.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Have any incentives been offered to Mr Ferguson to entice him to move?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I will ask the Director General who was involved in the direct discussions to answer that.

Mr ALLEN: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Reference was made to a crisis meeting earlier this week with various departmental heads. Did you attend, Mr Allen?

Mr ALLEN: Yes, I did.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What was actually discussed at that crisis meeting?

Mr ALLEN: A range of issues.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you discuss the option of the Community Offender Support Program Centre at Malabar as an option for Mr Ferguson?

Mr ALLEN: A range of alternative housing options were discussed at that meeting.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What were those alternative housing options?

Mr ALLEN: A range of alternative housing options both with our agency and with a number of other government agencies and other alternatives such as that.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You have not given us any yet.

Mr DAVID BORGER: Various options were considered.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What were those various options?

Mr DAVID BORGER: They were wide-ranging. They considered many different types of housing options that were more or less appropriate.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Let us take it slowly, director general. What other housing options did Housing have for Mr Ferguson?

Mr ALLEN: We discussed a range of other locations and other forms of housing for this gentleman.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What other locations?

Mr ALLEN: We discussed other locations across the whole of New South Wales, across the whole of the agency's property portfolio.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you think any in particular was suitable?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I think it is fair to say that obviously things were not ruled in or out. We have been trying very diligently to find a more appropriate place of accommodation for Mr Dennis Ferguson on behalf of everyone involved, particularly the residents and families in the North Ryde area. As I said previously, the location decision around this allocation was wrong. We are now trying to do whatever we can to ensure a better location. But this is a problem for the entire community. This person is not under a custodial order. He has been released from a prison in Queensland. He qualified for residency requirements in New South Wales. He must live somewhere and we have been trying to find a better location. I do not think that was an appropriate location.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am trying to explore that very point because we are all concerned. What other alternatives has the Government for somebody like Mr Ferguson?

Mr DAVID BORGER: The Government is still considering alternatives for Mr Ferguson, and working through that process.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Is the Minister aware that there has been a 13 per cent increase in the number of persons seeking assistance from the Homeless Persons Information Centre in the last financial year? Apparently, the primary cause of seeking assistance is housing stress. Workers at the centre report that, in particular, there is a severe lack of emergency accommodation for certain persons such as single women not fleeing domestic violence, and single parents with children. What is the Government doing to ensure that these gaps in services are filled?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Yes, we certainly are aware that there has been a very large increase for temporary accommodation in the past 12 months. We suspect some of that is related specifically to, I guess, a period last year where interest rates were at very high peaks where foreclosures for owner-investors on properties were increasing and where many renters were finding themselves simply out of the house, the house was being sold. That was simply one of the reasons why there were big increases. In terms of a solution to that temporary accommodation issue, I think there are a number of answers. The first is that all of the research shows that providing a permanent housing option first is generally a much more effective way of reducing homelessness and the churn of people in an out of homelessness centres, temporary accommodation and so forth.

Obviously with the Federal and State Government spend on building new social housing a priority will be housing homeless people wherever we can. We do have a Homelessness Action Plan, an Implementation Plan and additional funding from the Federal Government, a reform payment of approximately \$100 million over the next four years. In fact, that is matched and it adds up to an additional \$283 million to tackle homelessness over the next four years. The focus of the expenditure of that money really is on, firstly, trying to ensure that we do not just create additional services for homeless people in an already complex system but that we really do try to increase those services to provide housing first, and have more integrated delivery of services and support around those people.

The targets that we have are to reduce rough sleeping by 25 per cent by 2013 and to reduce overall homelessness by 7 per cent by 2013 and to reduce by one-third the number of Aboriginal people that are homeless. I think it is an important thing that the Government has very clear targets and we can be held accountable for those in the years to come.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The supported accommodation assistance sector reports a lack of funding leading to a lack, not necessarily of beds but rather of staff. Have you and the Minister for Community Services spoken to your Federal counterpart about boosting Supported Accommodation Assistance Program [SAAP] funding?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Certainly funding for those sorts of services can always be increased, but I think we do have a unique opportunity now with the human services cluster to more effectively remove some of the logjams and inefficiencies because in a sense the crisis accommodation program capital and the supported accommodation program support had been administered by separate agencies and separate areas. Now we would certainly hope that we can improve on that. I understand that there is always a need for additional funding for support workers.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What do you see as those logjams and inefficiencies?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Certainly the administration of crisis accommodation whereby one agency must provide the bricks and mortar and the capital and improvements to maintenance over time, and other agencies provide the support services within that. Obviously that just slows things down and any way that we can improve upon that we will do. Now we have a structure that will facilitate that much more easily. That is the general point I am trying to make.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The Homeless Persons Information Centre also reports that there is insufficient social housing, so that people are unable to move out of emergency accommodation into permanent accommodation. However, many people from rural areas come to Sydney because there is a greater range of emergency accommodation available here and there is an absence of that in the regions. How is new social housing building progressing in areas such as the Tweed, mid North Coast and Nowra?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As a general point, one of the advantages of the Federal stimulus funding that is going into social housing in New South Wales is that essentially because of the high land costs within Sydney we are building relatively more housing in regional areas, like the North Coast, South Coast—outside of Sydney—than we perhaps otherwise would do. I might ask Mike Allen, our chief executive officer, to provide some of the detail on that.

Mr ALLEN: There is a fairly broad spread of additional social housing being provided as a result of the economic stimulus plan. About 50 per cent of that additional housing is in the metropolitan area of Sydney and the other 50 per cent is spread across regional locations around New South Wales, including the Tweed and including Nowra.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How will the recent transfer of more than \$700 million away from the housing stimulus package affect the plans of Housing New South Wales in terms of building new houses, renovating existing properties and catching up on the backlog of maintenance issues?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Obviously you are referring to the national reduction. In New South Wales the approximate figure of our reduction is about \$187 million, which actually represents much less than the one-third proportion than we would otherwise be entitled to. We still believe that we can achieve approximately 6,000 houses from the national effort. Mike, did you wish to add to that?

Mr ALLEN: I think you have covered it fairly well.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Will the loss of Federal money result in the maintenance program being reduced in favour of money being directed towards the construction of new housing?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Certainly that is one option; however, I think we need to try to do everything we possibly can to deliver as many houses as we can under the stimulus package. No decision has been made at this stage to reduce maintenance to undertake more construction.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: One of the ongoing complaints one hears from tenants is the lack of timely maintenance, which leads to dwellings that might otherwise be available being not available for accommodation, and there is I believe, and you would agree, a considerable backlog in maintenance?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We would expect that in terms of maintenance to public housing properties about 40 per cent of all public housing properties will have some form of maintenance being undertaken in the next 12 months and there has been a substantial ramping up of the whole maintenance spend. In December last year the Premier announced that we would bring forward \$200 million of spending from future budgets to spend as soon as we can. In addition to that, \$130.4 million has been made available by the Commonwealth, so certainly we think this is a period of great activity on the maintenance front and 40 per cent of houses have had some work done. We can always improve that, always do more, but certainly we are making much bigger progress than we would have otherwise been able to.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I think you said that you anticipated building a further 6,000 dwellings?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Under the Commonwealth funding, yes.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many or what new-build housing projects will be cancelled as a result of the loss of funding? Will any be cancelled?

Mr DAVID BORGER: My understanding is that we have had to have some reduction from the original amount. I might ask Mike Allen to provide you with the detail.

Mr ALLEN: Any of the projects that might have otherwise been funded with the additional money will be channelled into future years' construction programs.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How far into the future is that?

Mr ALLEN: I would only be able to give you an estimate. I expect it would be into the next two years worth of the program.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: That soon?

Mr ALLEN: That is correct.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many upgrades of housing have been commenced as a result of the stimulus package?

Mr DAVID BORGER: About 60,000 public housing properties will have upgrades to them. In terms of the figure as at 30 June we can take that on notice and get that to you.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Thank you. You did mention earlier that there are approximately 39,000 people on the waiting list for social housing. What is the average waiting time for people who are accepted as having priority applications to be allocated housing?

Mr DAVID BORGER: That does vary depending on the region or the area. Mike, do you wish to add to that?

Mr ALLEN: It is almost impossible to give you an average figure because all household circumstances are different, so people are waiting for a different size or style of accommodation, whether it is ground floor or first floor or a particular location. I am not in a position to provide that sort of information. It would be quite misleading otherwise when related to the circumstances of other households.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Do you have any benchmarks by which you see whether the allocation is proceeding according to plan or whether there are unnecessary delays? How do you monitor the actual allocation of housing to people on the priority listing?

Mr ALLEN: The answer to that question is quite a detailed one. I am happy to take that as a question on notice and provide the information.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Thank you. This may be another question that you wish to take on notice: Has Housing New South Wales or Landcom ever had any contractual arrangements with a company called the Cornish Group?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I am happy to take that on notice.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: If so, could you provide the details of the contracts in terms of the date, the duration of the contract and the location of sites?

Mr DAVID BORGER: The information we are permitted to, notwithstanding commercial-in-confidence arrangements, we are happy to give.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Thank you very much. How many residents will need to be relocated from the Alexander Terraces in Camperdown to make way for the Common Ground project?

Mr DAVID BORGER: The intention with the Common Ground project, now that a site has been selected in Camperdown, is to ensure that there is a minimum number of tenancies that would need to go as part of the project. We are obviously committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable homeless people have a roof over their heads and a safe place to sleep at night. That is why we are undertaking the Common Ground project. It is one I am sure that you are familiar with. It has been pioneered in New York and is an organisation internationally recognised for its success in assisting chronically homeless people to get back on their feet. It uses a street to home approach to addressing homelessness and focuses on the longer-term solutions rather than just crisis accommodation. It involves giving people who are chronically homeless long-term housing and hardwiring support in the building.

On 3 August the Premier and I announced the site for the Camperdown project, the common ground model. The project will be built in the suburb of Camperdown, between Pymont Bridge Road, Lyons Road, Lambert Street and Layton Street. The building will be of purpose-built integrated social housing accommodation. The Camperdown project is obviously at the planning and design stage. A call for expressions of interest closed on 11 September. Those submissions are currently being assessed, but the principle is to have minimal impact on the existing terraces that are there. We certainly have not ruled out the need for some of those terraces to be demolished as part of the construction process, but we have set a minimal number.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Minister, as many of the tenants in those Alexander terraces are in their eighties, and have lived in the terraces for up to 50 years, how will the department rehouse them, and what support services will be used to make this transition as compassionate as possible?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Once the decision has been made—and obviously we are not at that point yet; we are just assessing the expressions of interest for that project—our relocation teams, which have been very busy across the State in the last six months relocating tenants, will provide a range of assistances for people who are wishing to move. Generally, people are relocated within the same suburb or in an adjacent neighbourhood.

Under the Housing Act, there is the possibility of evicting tenants where a reconstruction is being undertaken. It is my understanding that that provision of the Act has never been utilised. So we have always been able to come to a compromise with people who are being moved because of redevelopment of a site.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: So, if necessary, in order to keep people close to their communities and close to friends and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in this case, would you consider rehousing tenants in subsidised private accommodation?

Mr DAVID BORGER: That could be a possibility, yes, although generally we try to find places in existing public housing properties. But we have head-lease properties to undertake that task. In fact, sometimes we allow people to return to a redevelopment site.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I know you have announced the site, but did the department consider other alternatives for the building, such as the Housing NSW land along Elizabeth Street opposite Redfern Park, land that is currently vacant, or did you consider using some of the potential infill sites in Redfern and Waterloo?

Mr DAVID BORGER: A range of Housing NSW land was considered. The common ground committee was provided with information about that, and a land audit was undertaken. None of those alternative sites were seen as suitable. Mr Allen might comment further.

Mr ALLEN: There was a general view, expressed by a number of members of the community that were involved in the common ground committee, that Redfern and Waterloo already was a relatively dense social housing area, and there was a preference for a location outside Redfern and Waterloo.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Did you approach the City of Sydney as to whether the development could be incorporated into developments such as in Bay Street in Glebe or the South Sydney Hospital site?

Mr DAVID BORGER: The South Sydney Hospital site, I understand, is not owned by Housing NSW.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: No, it is not. That is why I asked whether you had approached the City of Sydney.

Mr DAVID BORGER: There was a commitment given by the chief executive of the City of Sydney at the launch of the common ground, which was in fact the morning after my appointment as Minister. That commitment was to undertake a land audit of appropriate sites. There may have been some confusion as to whether that would be a land audit of City of Sydney owned sites, or whether it was simply an audit of available sites within the City of Sydney. I understand that took place and the South Sydney site was not offered by the city as an appropriate site.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Minister, has Housing NSW asked other government bodies, such as the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, the Department of Environment and Climate Change, the Department of Health and so forth whether they had any suitable land that could be used for that project or similar projects?

Mr DAVID BORGER: My understanding is that the State Property Authority was requested to undertake a check of suitable sites that might be available for a common ground style model and that there were no suitable sites that fulfilled the criteria.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I would like to move on to social housing for women affected by domestic violence. How many women had their public housing residential tenancy agreements terminated in cases where they had been identified as affected by domestic violence, for example, if they need to move on and had to terminate a lease in a particular location?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I am not sure of the exact number.

Mr ALLEN: I would have to take that on notice.

Mr DAVID BORGER: We will take that on notice.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: On average, how long does it take Housing NSW to assess eligibility for priority housing or a priority transfer for women affected by domestic violence?

Mr ALLEN: There is no precise or average figure. It depends on the individual circumstances of each household that we are working with. It would generally be a period of some weeks, depending on the information that was available from the particular tenant or applicant.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many women, and what proportion, present with a history of domestic violence but are not listed as requiring priority housing or priority transfer?

Mr ALLEN: I do not know that we have that information available. I am happy to take it as a question on notice, but I am not sure that that is data that we record.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: If you would take it on notice, because unless women are put on those priority lists they potentially face a very long wait.

Mr ALLEN: I am not clear that the data is available, but I can be clear that women escaping domestic violence are a high priority for all forms of housing assistance. Indeed, the Government recently introduced some additional programs to assist women and children escaping from domestic violence.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What measures have you taken, Minister, to ensure that community housing providers have the capacity to handle the transfer of tenancies from Housing NSW?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We have a very detailed framework. We have a registrar put in place and we have a registration system, and to be a class 1 and class 2 provider is quite an onerous task. To support the community housing sector, we have made the decision to allow title to be transferred. The ownership of about 7,000 properties will be transferred to community housing providers by the end of June 2012. That will include the transfer of 500 properties that are already under leasehold or community housing management and the majority of the new properties coming through the nation-building program.

As I said, a regulatory code for community housing has now been put in place and gazetted, to ensure that tenants receive high-quality services from community housing providers that own government-funded properties or have titles that have been transferred. They will be subject to the highest level of regulatory oversight. This year, the Government made amendments to the Housing Act 2001 to provide for the establishment of that new regulatory system for community housing providers, and the appointment of a Registrar of Community Housing to administer that new system. The housing regulation, which commenced on 1 May, was developed after a lot of consultation with the community housing sector. That prescribes a regulatory code, and registered community housing providers must comply. All organisations receiving assistance from Housing NSW will be required to register under that new scheme.

The code builds on previous registration systems administered by Housing, and it focuses on areas of risk, tenancy management, asset management, financial management, housing development, and community housing partnerships and initiatives. It also requires housing providers to demonstrate that they have a very sound governance framework. Obviously, the higher the registration for class 1 and class 2 providers, the higher are the requirements for governance and financial management and all of those sorts of things. The registration system, we believe, will encourage a growth in the capacity particularly of the higher-functioning providers and it will support the growth of that housing sector and the capacity to deal with this title transfer.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Mr Allen, who actually made the decision for Mr Ferguson to stay at the Hyde Park Plaza for, I think you said, a number of weeks?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We are happy to take that question on notice and get you an answer within the required time frame.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: How did the department satisfy itself that Mr Ferguson was in fact a New South Wales resident, given that media reports state that he only moved to New South Wales in April 2009?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I am happy to take that question on notice and get you an answer within the required time frame.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Given that police stated in April 2009 that they were made aware that Ferguson had relocated to New South Wales and said that they would "continue to monitor his movements", did you or your department consult with the police on whether Ryde was even an appropriate location?

Mr DAVID BORGER: In relation to the location decision, as I have indicated, an investigation is being undertaken. I am happy to take that question on notice and get you an answer within the required time frame.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Will that investigation involve contacting the police to see if they had been first informed or their advice had been sought?

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: it is common practice that questions related to the police should be directed to the Minister for Police and that the Minister for Housing should be answering questions about housing.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: To the point of order: this is clearly a question to the Minister for Housing about what his department has done in its conversations with the police. It is not a question for the Minister for Police.

ACTING-CHAIR: We are wasting time here. I think the Minister is attempting to answer the question. The Minister's answer will stand. Can you move on to your next question?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I indicated before, generally the allocation decision that was made complied with the policies of Housing NSW. I said I was not happy with that, an investigation is being undertaken and that issue will be canvassed and we will get you a written answer within the required time frame.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: In relation to your discussions with the Premier, what did you actually tell the Premier before your press conference on Monday?

Mr DAVID BORGER: A number of discussions were undertaken. I do not intend to let you know about the private conversations I have with other individuals in Government.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: When did you actually tell the Premier that the Department of Housing did not have the power to move Mr Ferguson?

Mr DAVID BORGER: A range of interactions took place between my office and the Premier's office and other agencies of Government. As I said earlier, I am taking the question on notice to make sure we get accurate information about when all those contacts were made.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So you did not actually tell the Premier yourself?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I said, a range of interactions were made between myself, my office and other arms of Government prior to the press conference on Monday. I will take that question on notice and provide you with those answers with the required time frame.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Surely you can tell me whether you personally told the Premier or one of his staff that you did not have the power to move Mr Ferguson?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I said, there was a range of interactions between my office and other agencies of Government, including the Premier's office. I certainly spoke to a number of individuals within Government and there were e-mails, faxes and other staff members. We will take the question on notice and make sure we get an accurate answer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So, we need to take that on notice to work out what you said to the Premier?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I think I have answered the question on at least three occasions.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: You have not answered the question on any occasion. That is the problem.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I have answered the question on three occasions and I will take all those questions on notice.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Is it that you do not remember? I do not understand why—

Mr DAVID BORGER: I have said a number of interactions have been undertaken by me and my office with other agencies of Government and the Premier's Office and the Premier's Department. I have certainly spoken to the Premier about this matter on a number of occasions, but in relation to the detailed interactions I will take the questions on notice and get you an answer within the required time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: We have quite a lot of questions so we will either have to look at having another hearing or place a lot of questions on notice. I refer to Western Sydney. As Minister for Western Sydney did you support the axing of the south-west rail link?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As Minister for Western Sydney I support the good initiatives that are being taken in relation to public transport. That is all I will say on that matter.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you support the axing of the north-west rail link?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I have said previously, I supported a number of very good initiatives in Western Sydney to extend public transport: the Liverpool to Parramatta transitway, the transitway from the north-west sector to Parramatta, the work that is being undertaken on rail extensions in the south-west and planning that is being undertaken through the integrated transport plan.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Why was there no funding in the budget for construction of the M5 widening, the M5 East duplication, the M4 East extension, the F3-M2 link, or the F3-M7 link? They are all extremely important for Western Sydney's growth.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I am happy to take those questions on notice and provide you with an answer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you make any submission for funding for any of those major transport projects for Western Sydney in the budget process?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I am always arguing in favour of more money for Western Sydney with every Minister in the Government. I can guarantee you that. That includes all forms of public transport and all forms of service provision across Western Sydney.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you make any submissions in relation to any of those projects?

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: As the member knows very well, the Minister is not allowed to discuss submissions made to Cabinet. He should move on. The Minister has already given his answer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am not asking about submissions to Cabinet. I am asking whether he made any submissions for funding for any of those projects.

Mr DAVID BORGER: I have provided you with a number of answers. I am obviously an advocate for more funding for Western Sydney with all of my Cabinet colleagues and I will continue to prosecute the case of Western Sydney whether it is public transport, road construction or any other matter of public policy. So yes, I always—

ACTING-CHAIR: Order! I think the Minister is attempting to answer the question. Perhaps you could move on, Mr Pearce.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am just trying to get an idea as to the nature of your advocacy, whether it is just a whisper in the corner or whether you prepared submissions for funding for any of those projects.

Mr DAVID BORGER: Obviously detailed issues about the Transport budget that pre-dated my appointment as the Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport should be raised with the Minister for Transport.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: So you did not make any submissions for funding?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I think I have answered that question on a number of occasions.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The V8 Supercars could have gone to Eastern Creek. Did you support taking that major event away from Western Sydney?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Sydney Olympic Park sits within Auburn Council, which is a member of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils. Sydney Olympic Park is within Western Sydney. Yes, I support the event.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did you advocate for it to be at Eastern Creek?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As I have said, I support the event and I support it in its current place. It shows the extent of your knowledge of Western Sydney: Sydney Olympic Park is not on the North Shore, it is not in the eastern suburbs, it is not in The Hills shire, it is actually in Western Sydney, Greg, and perhaps you should get out there and have a look at it.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Point of order: At no time did Greg Pearce say any of that.

Mr DAVID BORGER: He said SOPA was not in Western Sydney.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I did not say that at all.

Mr DAVID BORGER: That is why you are not the shadow Minister for Western Sydney.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What programs are you managing to increase employment opportunities in Western Sydney?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I will start with the Housing portfolio. The creation of 6,000 to 9,000 new units of housing in the next two years as part of the stimulus package will have a huge impact on employment in Western Sydney. Every day when I go to work and see the white vans and utes running along the M4 heading off to construction projects is very satisfying. Obviously that is a major catalyst for employment in Western Sydney.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: In relation to the resident that was moved from Ryde, I think the answer was that he was moved to a hotel during this period. Are you able to indicate who is funding that hotel? Is it your department?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Are you able to tell us which hotel? Is it the Hyde Park Plaza again?

Mr DAVID BORGER: No, I am not, because under the Privacy Act I am not going to tell you where he is. I do not think I am permitted to, to be honest.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: How is that in the public interest?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: It is in the public interest with the amount of money being spent.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: How many houses or dwelling units have been completed under the Federal Government's stimulus project at this stage?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We will get you the number of exactly how many have been completed and provide that on notice. The first house in Australia under the stimulus was completed in New South Wales. As at 30 June more than 60 per cent of the entire construction effort in housing under stimulus was being undertaken

in New South Wales. I am sure you will understand that we have about a third of the nation's population, but almost two-thirds of the construction is being undertaken here in New South Wales, which I think is a pretty reasonable effort.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Do you have the actual number of houses?

Mr DAVID BORGER: No. I said the total number of completed to date I certainly will take on notice and get back to you, but almost all of the houses under stage one funding are now underway, with many nearing completion.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What figures are do you have on the level of mortgage defaults in western Sydney over the past 12 months?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I am happy to take that on notice. It is not something that Housing New South collects as a matter of course.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Surely it is obviously a critical element in the need for public housing? Will your department collect such figures, if it can?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We collect a range of figures about housing stress. If it is beneficial to the decisions we make, we certainly will do that. I am not aware that we actually have that information at the moment.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What proportion of renters in western Sydney spend more than 30 per cent of their income on rent?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We can certainly get that information to you. We will take it on notice.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: How many blocks of land currently are available for immediate sale and commencement of building in the Western Sydney Growth Centres?

Mr DAVID BORGER: We certainly will take that on notice, but I suspect that more appropriately should be put to the planning Minister.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What affordable housing requirement will the Government place on new land releases in the growth centres?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Certainly, again that is probably a question that should be referred to the Minister for Planning. Under the new affordable housing State environmental planning policy a range of opportunities are available for increasing the provision of affordable housing through things such as density bonuses to improve access to affordable rental housing in New South Wales.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Since the announcement of the V8 supercars race at Sydney Olympic Park in September 2008 the proponents of the race have been emphatic that only 140 trees would be removed from the park in order to hold the race. However, Save Olympic Park No V8 Race has counted 224 trees that have been removed.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Point of order: this question about trees being removed was asked this morning of the Minister for State Development, who actually has carriage of legislation for the V8 supercars.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I was under the impression this would have an impact on the Sydney Olympic Park. I thought it might be appropriate to gain some expert information on the topic.

ACTING-CHAIR: The question was asked and answered extensively down to identifying individual trees species.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I was not there.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: You can read the transcript. There was representation from your party.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The Chief Executive of the Sydney Olympic Park Authority is here.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: No.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Why not?

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Because the Minister for State Development has carriage of the race and the legislation that goes with it.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Minister, is it correct that you are not in a position to provide any answers in relation to the V8 race and its impact on Sydney Olympic Park?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As the Minister responsible for Sydney Olympic Park I am happy to answer your question. In order to facilitate the racetrack for the V8 supercars race event to be staged at Sydney Olympic Park from December 2009 the Homebush Motor Racing Authority approved the removal of 159 established gum trees and 60 established Manchurian pear trees from the streetscape at Sydney Olympic Park. My understanding is that some of those trees obviously are being relocated within the general precinct, for example, in Bicentennial Park. As to the precise number of how many have been chopped down, I guess, versus those that have been relocated to another precinct, I am happy to take that on notice and get back to you.

ACTING-CHAIR: The question was answered extensively by a previous Minister, including the details of which trees were relocated.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Rather than persist with that, I will return to community housing. Minister, how will the transfer of tenancies to community housing providers impact on existing Housing New South Wales residents with special health requirements?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As a general point, more people with disabilities and higher needs are in community housing than in social housing in each yearly allocation. Community housing is well established to provide assistance to tenants that have a range of health needs. We think it is a very good model for the many disadvantaged people. We are confident that community housing will be able to provide appropriate housing for people with a range of health requirements.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Given the extra expense that may result from provision of those measures, will there be any additional money provided to community housing providers to meet those costs?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I will ask Mike Allen, chief executive officer, to answer that.

Mr ALLEN: A range of financial and physical assistance is provided to community housing organisations. Physically, the provision of housing that has been modified, capable of modification or can be funded to be modified is undertaken by Housing New South Wales in consultation with a variety of community housing providers to ensure that appropriate housing is available in the social housing system for people with disabilities and other health complaints that may need particular changes, fixtures or fittings to the homes in which they live.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Will existing Housing New South Wales rent structures remain in place once properties have been transferred to community housing providers? How will you ensure that this remains the case in future?

Mr DAVID BORGER: As a general rule, public housing tenants and community housing tenants pay similar rents. They are income-based rents, not market based. The main difference is that community housing providers also capture Commonwealth rent assistance that is not available for public housing tenants.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What relationship will Housing New South Wales have with community housing providers after the transfers have been completed?

Mr DAVID BORGER: There still will be detailed involvement, mainly through the Office of Community Housing and also through the imposition of a registrar. Community housing providers in those class-one areas, the growth providers, will need to provide regular updates of information to the registrar in order to keep their registration. Only registered providers are able to have stock transferred to them. If they do

not meet those requirements or if they are unable to provide sufficient evidence to the registrar that they have good governance models, good financial systems in place and good management systems in place, obviously they would lose their status. There is a mechanism for that housing then to be moved to another community housing provider.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Would the title to those properties be transferred to another provider?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Yes. I understand we will register an interest on the title. There will be a statutory charge, and there will be an ability for those properties to be transferred to another provider.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Will the monitoring of community housing providers result in extra expenses for Housing New South Wales?

Mr ALLEN: I will answer the question in two parts. Yes, there is some additional cost that is borne out of the establishment of the Office of the Registrar. However, for the registration process itself, there are no substantial additional costs because the new system has been built on some of the previous registration and accreditation systems that have been in place.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Will community housing providers be able to provide services such as cleaning, maintenance, gardeners and security guards to residents who now receive those services via Housing New South Wales contracts?

Mr DAVID BORGER: Yes. If it is a complex that has a common area, it will be a requirement of the community housing provider to undertake the regular maintenance on that common area.

Mr ALLEN: Community housing providers already are providing that range of services across a number of properties in their portfolio. We are still having discussions with community housing providers and some of our various contract suppliers as to whether the Government contracts we have will carry across to community housing providers. The bottom line is implicitly that the services will be provided. We are still discussing what those contractual arrangements might be.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: My understanding is often there may be problems because there is a head contract and work is subcontracted out, which may lead to dissatisfaction with the quality of work. Once the State Government contracts expire, will the community housing provider be able to negotiate its own contracts?

Mr ALLEN: Generally the community housing providers arrange their own maintenance services. That happens extensively across that sector.

Mr DAVID BORGER: There are options, too.

Mr ALLEN: We are discussing options for the future as to how some of those arrangements might be facilitated in the short term.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Are there any plans to demolish the Joanna O'Dea complex within the next few years?

Mr DAVID BORGER: There are no current plans to demolish the Joanna O'Dea complex within the next few years, no.

ACTING-CHAIR: That concludes this estimates session. I thank the Minister and departmental officers for attending the hearing.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.

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