

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2021

Supplementary hearings

Questions taken on notice Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Legal Affairs

Families, Communities and Disability Services

Hearing: Friday 29 October 2021

**Answers due: 5pm Thursday 25 November
2021**

Minister Henskens – Budget Estimates 2021-2022 – Answers to questions on notice

Rough sleeper escaping Domestic violence

Transcript page 2

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you, Chair. I thank Minister Henskens for coming along this morning. I will start by asking about temporary accommodation. How many households did the Department of Communities and Justice [DCJ] support with temporary accommodation during the most recent lockdown?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The number did fluctuate during the recent lockdown.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What was the peak?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I believe it was about 2,000 but I will defer to Mr Vevers for the exact number.

Mr VEVERS: It was exactly so, Minister: just above 2,000.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Minister, or through you to Mr Vevers, do you have information about how many of those came from people sleeping rough, people escaping domestic violence? Do you have the breakdown of those figures or would you need to take that on notice?

Mr VEVERS: I can give you that breakdown. At its peak there were roughly 400 people who were sleeping rough. At the beginning of this week that number had reduced to around about 250.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What about women or children escaping domestic violence? Do you have that figure?

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

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: People who are Indigenous?

Mr VEVERS: I would have to take that on notice, too.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: And those under 18?

Mr VEVERS: There would be very few people under 18 in temporary accommodation. But I can take that figure on notice, too

Answer:

I am advised:

Between 21 June 2021 – 26 September 2021, Temporary Accommodation (TA) assistance was as follows:

Total households – 5,529.

Rough sleepers' households – 618.

Aboriginal (Total TA Households) – 1,603.

Aboriginal (Rough Sleepers households) – 248.

Escaping Family and Domestic Violence (Total TA Households) – 927.

Escaping Family and Domestic Violence (Rough Sleepers Households) – 45.

Under 18 (Total TA Households) – 166.

Under 18 (Rough Sleepers Households) – 2.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript page 6

Mr David Shoebridge (Acting chair): Minister, how many children are currently in alternative care arrangements?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Mr Shoebridge, that number fluctuates. I believe the most recent number is about 100. I will ask Ms Czech to give the precise number.

Ms CZECH: As of 12 October there were 91 children in alternative care arrangements [ACAs].

The ACTING CHAIR: How does that compare to this time last year, Ms Czech?

Ms CZECH: I will refer to my notes. Bear with me for a minute. If we go back to 30 September 2019— I know that is longer than 12 months—there were 173 children in ACAs at that period. If I could take on notice from 12 months ago, I can provide that figure to the Committee.

Answer:

I am advised:

As at 30 June 2021, there were 101 children and young people in alternative care arrangements. This is a decrease (4.7 per cent) from the 106 children and young people in alternative care arrangements as at the end of the June 2020 quarter, and a large decrease (36.9 per cent) from the 160 children and young people in alternative care arrangements as at the end of the June 2019 quarter.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 6

The ACTING CHAIR: Of the 91 children in alternative care arrangements, how many of those are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?

Ms CZECH: Of the 91 children at 12 October, 47 per cent of those children are Aboriginal children.

The ACTING CHAIR: So it is more than half now. Can you tell me what proportion of the children in alternative care were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? We will start with your 30 September 2019 data, but then if you can also provide 12 months ago on notice.

Ms CZECH: I have not got the actual figure. Again, I can come back to the Committee during the course of this morning. I understand the proportion of Aboriginal children was about the same, but I will confirm that number for the Committee.

Answer:

I am advised:

Of the 173 children in an alternative care arrangement at 30 September 2019, 38.2 per cent were Aboriginal.

On 30 June 2020, of the 106 children in an ACA, 38.7 per cent were Aboriginal compared to 48.5 per cent of the 101 children in an ACA as at 30 June 2021.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 8

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Czech, what is the rate at which children in alternative care arrangements attend school? How much school are they missing?

Ms CZECH: My understanding, Mr Shoebridge, is the majority of children are either attending school, or in some cases they have been excluded from school because of their behaviour. In those cases, those children are undertaking homeschooling. The actual figures, if we could take that on notice, we can provide those to the Committee.

The ACTING CHAIR: A child in alternative care arrangements, who has been excluded from school and not attending school, is literally 24 hours a day in a motel or 24 hours a day in a serviced apartment, with no interaction with family members and no interaction with peers. That is why I am asking about this, Ms Czech.

Ms CZECH: Like I said, we will provide the numbers for the Committee's information. Again, on a case-by-case basis, children will have usually a weekly activity sheet that they are involved in putting together. It does not mean that they stay on that premises 24/7. They are often out engaging in either therapy or other activities in the community but, again, it will vary child to child.

Answer:

I am advised:

Over 90 per cent of children in an alternative care arrangement are enrolled or in the process of enrolling in school, TAFE or in an apprenticeship. A small number of children have been excluded from school, and of these many are being home schooled. There is also a small number of children who refuse to attend school and their caseworkers continue to work through this with them.

Depending on a child's needs, appropriate therapeutic supports are engaged, this may include counselling, speech and occupational therapy, and behaviour support.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 10

The ACTING CHAIR: Out of a \$2.5 billion budget, \$164 million is targeted to early intervention; is that right?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: No, because part of the \$756.5 million supports statutory child protection interventions and, as well, an assessment of child abuse. I am not sure of the complete—

The ACTING CHAIR: Assessing child abuse is not early intervention. That is not directed at helping families. What of the \$756 million would be categorised as prevention and early intervention?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I am not sure I agree with the proposition you made with regard to that first amount. When the statutory child protection system comes into place or intervenes, the last resort is for children to go into out-of-home care. The principal objective is to work with the families to ensure that that outcome does not occur. I am not sure that—

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I am asking you—

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I am not sure I agree with you that you can discount all of that \$756 million—

The ACTING CHAIR: I am asking you—

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Point of order—

The ACTING CHAIR: Of that \$756.5 million, how much is actually being spent on helping families? That is, money to support families and to prevent children being removed. How much of the \$756 million in that statutory child protection bucket is actually being spent to help families?

Ms CZECH: If I could make a contribution, that \$700 million in part funds 2,333 caseworkers. Last financial year we completed more than 36,000 risk assessments. A very small proportion of those risk assessments meant that children actually came into care. I would have to check my notes for the actual figure but it was around the 2,400 mark, from memory. You could argue that the remainder, on balance—again, depending on need and the outcome of a risk assessment, but families were supported—was not only to mitigate the risk that might have been presenting but to provide ongoing support to families.

The ACTING CHAIR: What ongoing support is being provided to families? How much of the \$756 million has been allocated not to paying for caseworkers, not to pay for the assessment within the department and employee costs? I am asking—and it should be a fairly straightforward question and answer—how much of the \$756 million has been spent on early intervention and supporting families?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: We can probably take it on notice, but we would need to cost services like Brighter Futures, Youth Hope, Intensive Family Preservation, Multi-Systemic Therapy and so on. There are a range of programs that are included within that \$756.5 million number. We could cost those, perhaps, to give you the more granular detail that you seem to be after.

Answer:

I am advised:

Supports to intervene early, preserve families together, and restore children to their birth families are included within a number of programs, including Targeted Earlier Intervention, out-of-home care (OOHC) and child protection. Some of this work is undertaken by child protection and OOHC caseworkers and cannot be split out from statutory functions and therefore cannot be accurately quantified in monetary amounts.

Within the \$764 million allocated to child protection, at least \$129 million is directly allocated to family preservation programs, such as Brighter Futures, Intensive Family Preservation, Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect and Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare.

This is in addition to investment in other programs, including:

- \$164 million on Targeted Earlier Intervention;
- \$19 million on Family Connect and Support;
- \$12.6 million on permanency support program family preservation; and
- \$8.3 million on out-of-home care non-placement supports.

Youth Justice staff vaccination

Transcript Page 14

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Are there any who are not vaccinated or might be on leave because they have not been vaccinated?

Mr O'REILLY: There would be a small number but they are not working in frontline Youth Justice currently because they would be on leave because they are not allowed to work in Youth Justice front line without at least one jab.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I want to ask about the circumstances around that. What is the number of staff who have not had any vaccination at this point?

Mr O'REILLY: It is approximately 20. I will come back to you with the exact number because it does change each day. There are people who would not have been vaccinated by 25 October but will have arranged their vaccination since then. We will take on notice the exact number who are not quite compliant, but also I can assure you they are not working at the moment.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I want to know about the long-term planning for that. Out of that roughly 20—and I accept that you will come back with the specifics—have they made appointments? What are the arrangements going to be if they are refusing to do it?

Mr O'REILLY: It varies. There are some people who have made appointments, there are some people who are seeking a medical exemption and have not managed to put it in place yet, and there are some people who have made a decision not to get vaccinated. They will need to make a choice about whether they take their leave and reflect and change their minds or whether they leave the service.

Answer:

I am advised:

All Youth Justice staff who are currently working are compliant with the Department of Communities and Justice COVID-19 vaccination policy. This policy requires operational staff to have at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccination by 25 October 2021, or to provide a valid medical contraindication certificate. The same requirement applies to non-operational staff from 1 December 2021.

As at 8 November 2021, there are 23 ongoing Youth Justice staff who are considered non-compliant with this policy. These staff are not at work and are being managed by DCJ on a case by case basis.

Children in custody

Transcript Page 16

The ACTING CHAIR: How many individual children aged 10 to 13 have been held in custody, held in jail, over the last 12 months, Mr O'Reilly?

Mr O'REILLY: That would require a bit of analysis, which we can take on notice, because there are some who have come in multiple times.

The ACTING CHAIR: I understand.

Mr O'REILLY: In terms of how many individuals, we would have to do some work on that and come back to you.

The ACTING CHAIR: Would you know what the average length of stay, the average length of detention, is for children aged 10 to 13?

Mr O'REILLY: Not off the top of my head. The vast majority are on remand, as you would expect, but we do not know right now what the average number of days is, but that is a piece of analysis we can do quickly and come back to you within the 21 days.

The ACTING CHAIR: Mr O'Reilly, you have jumped to my next question, which is: What proportion are on remand and what proportion are sentenced?

Mr O'REILLY: Of the three, my understanding is one is on a control order and two are on remand.

The ACTING CHAIR: Could you possibly give us the analysis on remand over the last 12 months as well?

Mr O'REILLY: Certainly.

Answer:

I am advised:

For the period between 1 November 2020 and 31 October 2021, there were 122 individual children between the ages of 10 and 13 years held in Youth Justice detention. 118 were on remand and 4 were subject to control orders.

Their average length of stay was 6.92 days (remand average 6.96 days, control average 0.5 days after their period of remand was converted to a control order by the court).

Family is Culture budget

Transcript Page 19

The ACTING CHAIR: What has been the budget allocation to implement Family is Culture?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I think I will need to go to Ms Campbell for the monetary amount.

Ms CAMPBELL: Thank you, Minister. In terms of the funding, we have repurposed a number of resources within DCJ to really focus on what is a key priority for our department in implementing the Family is Culture report.

The ACTING CHAIR: So what is the budget?

Ms CAMPBELL: It comes from different parts of DCJ. I am happy to take that one on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, what proportion of targeted early intervention service funding is actually provided to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations? Some 43 per cent of the kids in out-of-home care are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids. What proportion of early intervention service funding is going to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations? It was one of the core recommendations of the Family is Culture report.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: There is an officer-level working group co-chaired by AbSec CEO John Leha and Eleri Morgan-Thomas from DCJ, who is in the process of commissioning Aboriginal projects through the Aboriginal Affairs-led budget. I would need to take on notice the financial magnitude of the Aboriginal early intervention programs that you have asked about.

The ACTING CHAIR: How much funding has your government allocated to the implementation of the Aboriginal Case Management Policy and the rules and practice guidance, including establishing the Aboriginal community-controlled mechanisms, community facilitators and Aboriginal family-led decision-making consistent with the recommendations of the Family is Culture report?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I will defer to Ms Campbell, but I believe that those matters are working their way through the Closing the Gap budgetary process for more resources. Many of the departmental resources are obviously dedicated to servicing Indigenous children.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are going to provide that on notice?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Yes.

Answer:

I am advised:

Implementation of many of the Family is Culture recommendations are being managed through existing resources within the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). This includes reprioritising projects and realigning resources to support the implementation.

In addition, a new Deputy Secretary role has also been established to oversee Aboriginal outcomes. Mr Brendan Thomas, former chief executive officer of Legal Aid NSW and a Wiradjuri man, has been appointed to this role.

\$1.2 million of funding is provided over three years for AbSec to support the implementation of Aboriginal Case Management Policy (\$600,000 in 2019-20, \$300,000 in 2020-21 and \$300,000 in 2021-22).

\$10,163,889 of funding is provided to Aboriginal organisations under the Targeted Earlier Intervention program. This represents 6.6 per cent of all Targeted Earlier Intervention program funding.

DCJ also funds the Aboriginal Knowledge Circle (\$180,000 total per annum) to advise the NSW Government on strategies to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal

children, young people and families that come into contact with the child protection system.

Children in out-of-home care

Transcript Page 20

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Minister, you were asked a question by Mr Shoebridge about a particular child who had been in out-of-home care for 300 plus days.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Is that child still in the care of the department?

Ms CZECH: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In which town or district is that child located?

Ms CZECH: I would have to take that question on notice and provide that information to the Committee.

Answer:

I am advised:

Since budget estimates, the child in question has left the Alternative Care Arrangement. The child is still in out-of-home care, with case management through a contracted non-government organisation. The young person is located in the Western Sydney Nepean Blue Mountains District.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 20

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I think the evidence earlier given was that 72 per cent of children exit alternative care arrangements within 90 days, which means I think 28 per cent do not. Are those correct figures?

Ms CZECH: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: With those who do leave the alternative care arrangements, where do they go? Do you keep track of that?

Ms CZECH: We do. They will exit to a variety of different placement types. In the first instance, some children will go home, so they will be restored home if that is safe to do so. Some children will go to a foster placement. Some children will go to residential care. Some children will go to what we call the interim care model, which is another funded emergency model for children who are aged 9 to 14 who have low to medium support needs.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Could you provide, on notice, a breakdown?

Ms CZECH: Absolutely, yes.

Answer:

I am advised:

Of the children who exited alternative care arrangements in the 12 month period to June 2021:

- 18.3 per cent went to a foster care placement
- 18.3 per cent went to intensive therapeutic care
- 10.9 per cent went to a relative or kinship placement
- 3.6 per cent were restored to their parent(s)
- 49 per cent exited to a different arrangement including supported independent living, other funded placements etc.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 20

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I think 28 per cent do not exit alternative care arrangements [ACA] within the 90 days. What are the statistics around those other 28 per cent? How long do they stay in alternative care arrangements or is it open-ended?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: It is a range of periods of time. Mr Searle, a number of these children have very complex needs and it is difficult to place them. Sometimes it takes a period of time to arrange the appropriate type of accommodation for them to leave ACA.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Could you provide on notice, Minister, or the department, the breakdown about what happens to the remaining 28 per cent? Can you tell us what are the top five longest stays for children in alternative care arrangements and which regions?

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: Which time frame?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: The year to 30 June last year and then perhaps for the previous year so we can get a benchmark on what is happening. Thank you for that. You say there are difficulties in providing placements. That includes foster care placements; is that right?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Yes.

Answer:

I am advised:

As at 30 June 2020 the median length of stay was 84.5 days, and the longest stay was 833 days. As at 30 June 2021 the median length of stay was 55 days, and the longest stay was 303 days.

Trends in length of stay are improving over time however some children stay longer than others due to their specific needs and the lack of carers who are able to manage highly complex behaviours.

Foster Parents

Transcript Page 21

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many foster parents did we have as at 30 June this year?

Ms CZECH: I might need to defer to my colleague online, Ms Campbell. She may have those numbers with her. If that is okay.

Ms CAMPBELL: I do not have those [audio malfunction].

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I can see, Minister, we are back on the information super highway.

Ms CAMPBELL: I do not have those specific details. However, I do have information on an organisation that we fund called My Forever Family NSW. In 2020-21 they recruited and supported carers and conducted 11 carer recruitment campaigns, resulting in referral of about 676 applicants to service providers for further training. This is actually higher than the 2019-20 result, which was 556 referrals. As Ms Czech alluded to, the process is once someone has indicated an interest in becoming a carer there is an assessment process. We are working together to look at how we can expedite that process while making sure that we do the right assessment to make sure that we get the right sort of carers to support children and young people.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Right.

Ms CZECH: We can take the question on notice about the number of carers. I understand it is in the vicinity of 14,000, but we can come back with the exact numbers.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If you can tell us as at 30 June this year and perhaps 30 June last year, so we have a benchmark.

Ms CZECH: Sure.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I think you said there had been a decrease during the lockdown. Do you have an appreciation or a sense of by how much it has decreased?

Ms CZECH: We can take that on notice and provide that to the Committee.

Answer:

I am advised:

The Office of the Children's Guardian reports data on authorised carers. The total authorised carers as at 30 June 2021 was 18,369 and the total for 30 June 2020 was 18,832. This includes foster, relative and kinship carers.

There have been no substantial changes to the number of applications or enquiries about being an authorised carer. There is some anecdotal evidence that the pandemic has delayed some people from applying or enquiring about fostering. However, other changes such as more work flexibility may have also enabled other people to consider fostering in their lives.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 21

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Minister, you did not hear a word of criticism of them from me or anybody else at this table. We understand that. In answer to some of Mr Shoebridge's questions, you have given some figures about out-of-home care—I think in the vicinity of 16,000. Are they all foster placed?

Ms CZECH: No.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What is the breakdown?

Ms CZECH: I will just refer to my notes. I think I said the figure as at 30 June was 15,855, maybe.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My note is 15,895.

Ms CZECH: I am going on memory, which is not the best thing to do.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Around 15,895.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Around 16,000.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you give us a sense of the breakdown? How many are in foster care? Are any of them in hotels or is that alternative care?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: They are the ACAs.

Ms CZECH: They are the alternate care arrangements, and that was the 91 number as at 12 October.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I will come back to that.

Ms CZECH: I am just checking my notes. One of my colleagues—Ms Campbell might have it close to hand. There are about 600 children—and we again can provide this to the Committee—in residential care. Then there is a split of the remainder across both foster care and relative or kinship care. We can provide the numbers to the Committee and the comparison.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If you could, on notice, provide it in a table form that would be very useful. For 30 June this year and the previous year, just so we have an appreciation of what is happening.

Answer:

I am advised:

Children and young people in out-of-home care by placement type in NSW as at 30 June 2020 as follows:

- Foster care – 6,600 (40.8 per cent)
- Relative and kinship care – 8,722 (54 per cent)
- Non-related person (e.g. a friend) – 20 (0.1 per cent)
- Residential Care – 558 (3.5 per cent)
- Independent Living – 141 (0.9 per cent)
- Other – 119 (0.7 per cent)
- Total – 16,160 (100 per cent).

Children and young people in out-of-home care by placement type in NSW as at 30 June 2021 as follows:

- Foster Care – 6,354 (40 per cent)
- Relative and kinship care – 8,510 (53.5 per cent)

- Non-related person (e.g. a friend) – 17 (0.1 per cent)
- Residential Care – 660 (4.2 per cent)
- Independent Living – 178 (1.1 per cent)
- Other – 176 (1.1 per cent)
- Total – 15,895 (100 per cent).

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 22

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I appreciate that. How many children have passed through alternative care arrangements in each of the past two financial years? Rather than a point in time, I want the total number of persons.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: I think we will need to take that on notice, Mr Searle.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is exactly what I am expecting. I am actually seeking information here.

Ms CZECH: Yes, we can do that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That would be very useful.

Answer:

I am advised:

During the rolling 12 months to June 2021, a total of 528 unique children were in an alternative care arrangement for some period.

During the rolling 12 months to June 2020, a total of 562 unique children were in an alternative care arrangement for some period.

Children in Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 22

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am no longer a shadow Minister, what can I say? Minister, or whoever is relevant, which districts have the highest number of children in alternative care arrangements? I think you have different districts for your department. You have, for example, the Central Coast district, Nepean-Blue Mountains, south-western Sydney and western Sydney. If you could provide the breakdown when you are providing that volume of children passing through alternative care arrangements, could you do it by region?

Ms CZECH: We can. There are 16 districts in New South Wales. We keep data for each of those districts on a whole range of things, as you will appreciate, including alternative care arrangements. Again, we can provide that information to the Committee.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Please do. When you are providing that information, can you also inform us how many of those children are First Nations children?

Ms CZECH: Of course, we can provide that breakdown.

Answer:

I am advised:

The DCJ district with the highest number of children in ACA in the rolling 12 months to 30 June 2021 was the Western NSW District. Western NSW District also had the highest number of children as at 30 June 2020.

Cost of Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 23

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I acknowledge that interjection. What is the average accommodation cost per night for each of those children in alternative care arrangements? I am expecting this will all be on notice, Minister. This is not a "gotcha" moment.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Mr Searle, it is not a cheap exercise.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am not expecting that it would be, Minister.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: That is why it is really a last resort, very much a last resort, not only from the children's point of view but also from a budgetary point of view—but most importantly from the children's point of view, of course.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Sure. Again, the cost per night, per region perhaps, of each child in alternative—

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: It will be different per region, I would imagine.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I would expect so, and this is why I am asking for that breakdown so we can—in the nature of this being budget estimates—try to understand what those costs are, and also the incidental costs. I assume there are incidentals, which would be food and other non-accommodation costs.

Ms CZECH: It is all included in the total price. We can give you a figure.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay, so it is an amortised cost.

Ms CZECH: And, as you have requested, we can do it by district. That is fine.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Give us whatever granularity you have in the information.

Ms CZECH: Sure

Answer:

I am advised:

Alternative care arrangements are arranged on an emergency basis and paid on invoice in arrears. DCJ systems do not allow for accurately relating placement length and payments made to calculate an average cost per night of an ACA.

Risk of Significant Harm

Transcript Page 23

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That would be much appreciated. I will turn to risk of significant harm reports. The lockdowns have seen fewer interactions between mandatory reporters and children. Is that correct?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: There has been a decline in risk of serious harm reports during the lockdown.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What has been that reduction? Is it a 10 per cent reduction, 20 per cent? Have you not tabulated that? Again, I am happy for you to take that on notice so we can get the accurate figures.

Today is 29 October—is it down compared to this time last year, for example?

Ms CZECH: Like last year in the lockdown—as one of the Committee members mentioned earlier, it was clearly a much longer lockdown this time around—we have seen the number of both calls and concern reports coming into the Child Protection Helpline decrease. We can directly attribute that to children not being at school. The biggest decrease in reports has been from the Department of Education. I will find you the decrease. From memory I think in the lockdown period it was about a 17 per cent decrease. Obviously children have resumed school in the past two weeks, albeit in two stages. We are expecting, although I do not have the data yet, a pretty quick bounce back. That is based on what we saw last year, again after a much shorter lockdown period.

Answer:

I am advised:

The recent lockdown period has affected the number of risk of significant harm (ROSH) reports received in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. In June 2021, there were reductions in ROSH reports received from mandatory reporters such as NSW Education (-17 per cent), NSW Police (-5 per cent), NSW Health (-5 per cent), Childcare (-11 per cent) along with non-mandatory reporters (-5 per cent), when compared to June 2020.

However, the total number of ROSH reports in 2020-21 (276,932) is an increase of 17.1 per cent compared to 2019-20 (236,527).

Risk of Significant Harm

Transcript Page 24

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My understanding is that the latest DCJ statistics indicated that there were something like 114,000 risk of serious harm reports in the calendar year 2020 but around 72 per cent of those children were not seen by anyone from the department. Has that improved in 2021 or has it got worse? Again, if you do not have the figures to hand, you can provide them on notice to the Committee.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: What I should say before Ms Czech goes to the number is that in terms of actual numbers of children seen between, say, 2010 and 2011, where a bit under 13,000 children were seen—the latest figures I have got are for 2019-2020. Ms Czech may have 2020-2021. We are now seeing over 35,000, so it is almost a three times increase in the absolute number of children who are being seen who are the subject of a Risk of Serious Harm [RoSH] report. Part of the reason why the percentage of children seen has not matched that huge increase in number is because there has been an increase in reporting.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Sure.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: But there has certainly been a substantial increase in the percentage of children seen over the last decade.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: And, in any case, we will get those figures on notice.

Ms CZECH: If I could add to the Minister's comments, our child protection case workers within DCJ have never seen more children than they did in the last financial year. It is quite a significant increase. If you look back to even five years ago, the numbers of children being seen have increased significantly. There is clearly still more to do.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: And, in any case, when you provide the figures we can see all that.

Answer:

I am advised:

Historical data on children assessed by a Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) caseworker can be found on the Annual Statistical Report 2019-20. It should be noted that there has been a change in the definition of children at risk of significant harm (ROSH) seen by caseworkers, with more stringent requirements introduced in 2017-18.

There were 126,818 children reported as at risk of significant harm in 2020-21. Of these, 36,524 children were seen by a DCJ caseworker. This is an increase of 3.6 per cent and the most children ever seen. 90,294 of these children were not seen by a DCJ caseworker.

It should be noted that where caseworkers are not able to see children, referrals to NGO services ensure that some of these children receive a response.

Risk of Significant Harm

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Just in providing that, could you also indicate whether the percentage of children not seen has also been increasing or whether that has actually gone down? I understand that when you have more reporting there is more to do, and maybe you will see more, but, again, what is the overall percentage?

Ms CZECH: We can provide that. I will just add that there are almost 20,000 children who are reported at risk of significant harm but where we are unable to provide a face-to-face assessment we refer out to a service. An example might be a referral out to a multi-systemic therapy service. So it is not that those children are not getting a response; it is just not a response in some instances from DCJ caseworkers.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In which case, when you provide the information on notice, if you can indicate how many are just not seen as opposed to the DCJ interface, that would be useful.

Ms CZECH: Sure. We can provide that information.

Answer:

I am advised:

Where a Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) caseworker is not able to see a child reported at risk of significant harm, referrals to NGO services ensure that some of these children receive a response.

Family is Culture

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The ACTING CHAIR: I think that round of questioning has now concluded. Minister, you said that 94 of the 125—I think there actually might be 126 recommendations in "Family is Culture", but 94 of the recommendations had been wholly or partially implemented. Can you provide sometime today or, if not, as early as possible on notice a list of those recommendations that have been fully implemented and those recommendations that have been partially implemented?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: No doubt, Mr Shoebridge, you have seen the "Family is Culture" progress report from May 2021.

The ACTING CHAIR: I have.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: That obviously goes through all of the recommendations. I think, in terms of the items that were not completed in May that have now become completed and, therefore, there is a new status—

The ACTING CHAIR: An update on the May report is what I am asking for.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: We could give you an update in terms of status. But obviously the items which were completed in May—we will not need to tell you again that they have been completed.

The ACTING CHAIR: I am more than happy to rephrase my question: If you could give me an update on the May report, that might be the easiest way of addressing it.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Yes. I do not know how quickly that can be done, whether it can be done today, but we will do it as quickly as we can, Mr Shoebridge.

Answer:

I am advised:

The current status of the 125 Family is Culture systemic recommendations are as follows:

- 94 are in progress
- 31 are yet to commence.
- Most of the recommendations that have not started are scheduled for legislative review in 2024 however there are a few that have not started due to sequencing, as they are contingent on other recommendations being progressed first.
- Due to a misprint in the initial report, where two recommendations were listed as recommendation 93, only 125 were initially reported on.
- Rather than renumber recommendations, a decision was made to join one of these recommendations with another, similar recommendation.

Aboriginal-controlled organisations

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The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, on notice could you indicate how much of the \$2.4 billion in the budget has gone to Aboriginal-controlled organisations? If you could provide that on notice, that would be appreciated. If you could compare that to the last financial year, that would also be appreciated. Would you mind taking those on notice?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Sure.

Answer:

I am advised:

In 2021-22, it is estimated that funding to Aboriginal community controlled organisations will be more than 11 per cent of the total paid to service providers in child protection and out-of-home care areas.

In 2020-21, it is estimated that approximately 10 per cent of the total paid to service providers in these areas went to Aboriginal community controlled organisations. Over the last six years the number of funded Aboriginal community controlled organisations has increased by 23 per cent and the proportion of total funding has increased from approximately 8 per cent.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) supports Aboriginal community controlled organisations in various ways. The NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation, (AbSec) is funded to provide a range of projects and activities targeted to support Aboriginal community controlled organisations. These include:

- core sector development and advocacy,
- through the Growth and Partnerships Project, supporting Aboriginal organisations delivering out of home care to maintain accreditation through targeted supports, and supporting Aboriginal organisations in partnerships with non-Aboriginal providers to realise accreditation and transition to stand alone delivery.
- supporting the implementation of Aboriginal Case Management Policy.
- Supporting the Aboriginal Family Preservation Model co-design and Guardianship Support Model

\$10,163,889 of funding is provided to Aboriginal organisations under the Targeted Earlier Intervention program. This represents 6.6 per cent of all Targeted Earlier Intervention program funding

Social Housing waitlist

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The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I assume Mr Vevers has this but, Minister, you might—the current social housing waiting list.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Mr Vevers, I think you have probably got that number at hand.

Mr VEVERS: Yes. The waiting list is published for the end of June each financial year. There were 46,087—this is June 2020 because the 2021 list is not yet published—people on the general list and 5,308 on the priority list.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: When are we going to get the 2021 list, because it is now almost November?

Mr VEVERS: It is published in November each year. There is a process that we go through to eliminate people who have tragically passed away, for example, or people who indicate they are no longer in need of being on the waiting list. We go through that process in order to publish an accurate number, and that takes some time to go through.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Do you know how many of those people are women over 55?

Mr VEVERS: We would know that. I do not know that right now. I would need to take that on notice. I will take it on notice

Answer:

I am advised:

As at 30 June 2021, there were 49,928 applicants on the social housing waiting list, of which 7,459 (14.9%) were women over 55 (who were the main applicants).