

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2022

Additional hearings

**Questions taken on notice
Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Regional NSW and
Stronger Communities**

Families, Communities and Disability Services

Hearing: Wednesday 2 March 2022

Answers due: 29 March 2022

Minister Maclaren-Jones – Budget Estimates 2022 – Answers to questions on notice

Risk of Significant Harm

Transcript Page 3

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Of the 90,000 children not seen by the department, please tell the Committee on notice how many were seen by somebody and how many just missed out.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I am happy to take that on notice, unless Mr Tidball has anything else further to say.

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

NGO Short Term Indemnity Scheme

Transcript Page 7

The ACTING CHAIR: After you put up the NGO Short-term Indemnity Scheme, the non-indemnity scheme, ACWA wrote to you on 16 December last year, you and the Treasurer, and said, "It doesn't work. It's not protecting our members." Has the Government responded in writing to the peak bodies' concerns since they raised this in December of last year?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That correspondence was sent prior to me becoming a Minister, so we would need to take it on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Campbell, I assume you have been dealing with this in some detail. You seem to be the person who has some detail about this, is that right:

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are aware of the correspondence that ACWA sent in December.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: Have you responded?

ANNE CAMPBELL: We have been talking with ACWA in terms of this issue and we have certainly fed it into the work that we are doing with other Commonwealth and State agencies, but I should note that not all agencies need the cover. Only some have signed up to the scheme and some, even if they no longer currently have cover are historically covered for the period pre-2017. I just thought that was important. To date we have had 31 non-government organisations that have applied to the scheme; seven have signed the indemnity clause, seven are awaiting provider signatories, and the remaining are currently being processed. Certainly no non-government operation has flagged with me a concern in terms of the historical abuse at this point. But certainly, as the Minister and the secretary have said, we do not want a provider to become insolvent; they are looking after children in out- of-home care and we would do whatever we need to do to prevent that occurrence happening.

The ACTING CHAIR: You know that some of the biggest providers of out-of-home care have what are called claims-made policies.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: You are aware of these?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: And those providers have zero historical cover, do they not, unless the indemnity is extended?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would probably need to take that on notice.

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The ACTING CHAIR: This is a pretty fundamental thing, Ms Campbell. If you are responsible for dealing with this issue and you do not know the difference between a claims-made policy and an annual policy that covers the events in a year, then we have got a problem. You know that a series of very large providers have claims-made policies, do you not?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would need to take that on notice. **The ACTING CHAIR:** Mr Tidball, do you understand the difference?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I do understand the difference, Chair.

The ACTING CHAIR: Have you been briefed and are you aware that a whole series of the providers have claims-made policies?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I have been briefed on this issue. I have been in the chair for a month. I totally own the fact that the buck stops with me in terms of dealing with this issue. What I will do is meet with the sector as the first step to hear more about the issues that you have raised.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Campbell, how is it that of the 31 NGOs that have reached out for cover, even for the partial cover that has been offered, only seven of them have actually had it finalised? When did this start?

ANNE CAMPBELL: It started in December and this is as of 21 February, so it is a relatively short time frame, but I am happy to take it on notice and get a further update.--- question continues on next ROW below.

Answer

I am advised:

A formal response to ACWA's letter was sent on 8 March and has been received by ACWA.

DCJ has been liaising with peak bodies ACWA, YFoundations and Absec, and OOHG and youth homelessness service providers regarding their concerns about the design of the Short-term Indemnity Scheme.

Uninsured historical physical and sexual abuse (PSA) claims will be considered as part of the work being progressed by the inter-jurisdictional working group (IJWG) to develop a sustainable and long-term solution to this critical issue.

There is significant variability across service providers in relation to potential exposure to PSA claims relating to incidents that occurred prior to June 2017 depending on the type of cover held under previous insurance policies and the provider's service delivery history.

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In the event a provider has a PSA claim made against them for which they do not have insurance cover, DCJ will work with the provider, on a case by case basis, to support business continuity and ongoing service delivery.

The scheme was launched on 8 December 2021. Information relating to the number of indemnity schemes executed is not publically available.

NGO Short Term Indemnity Scheme

Transcript Page 8

"The ACTING CHAIR: Sorry, are you telling me that two or more months is a reasonable time frame to have the sector heading on without any insurance cover for historical, sexual and physical child abuse claims? Are you saying two months is fine, it is perfectly acceptable?

ANNE CAMPBELL: No, I am saying that the non-government organisations that have reached out to apply for this scheme, there are 31 of them as at 21 February and we are still awaiting some of the signatories on those.

The ACTING CHAIR: No, you told me seven have signed.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: You told me another seven are being processed.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, and another—

The ACTING CHAIR: And you told me 17 are still being assessed.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Correct.

The ACTING CHAIR: That sounds like the delay is at your end, if it is assessed, Ms Campbell.

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would need to take that on notice and check, Mr Shoebridge.

The ACTING CHAIR: What did you mean by ""assessed""?

ANNE CAMPBELL: It means they are going through the assessment process to see if they are eligible. "

Answer

I am advised:

There were some minor delays progressing some applications over the Christmas and New Year period due to staff leave as well as a priority focus on the COVID response, however these have since been resolved.

Whilst the application process for the scheme is straightforward, like any legal agreement there are steps that require both DCJ and service providers to apply rigour and due diligence.

Service providers are not disadvantaged by the processing time. Under the scheme, a service provider's indemnity period commences from the date they apply, and they are covered for any claim made during the indemnity period relating to an incident that has occurred since 30 June 2017.

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Additionally, if a provider has had a claim made against them in between losing PSA insurance cover and applying to the scheme, they are able to back date the start date of their indemnity period to ensure cover for the claim.

DCJ has been updating service providers on the progress of implementation of the scheme as well as work to progress the long-term solution. Service providers have not raised any concerns with DCJ regarding the application process.

Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 9

"**The ACTING CHAIR:** Minister, it is good news that there were, as at 31 December, less children in alternative care—some 70. Do you have a more current figure than 31 December? The previous Ministers got weekly updates on this matter.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I will ask the department if they have a more up-to-date figure."

Answer

I am advised:

As at 31 December 2021, 70 children were in alternative care arrangements.

I am advised that any analysis on data trends are better represented broadly over time with aged quarterly data which is subject to remediation processes. Data as at 31 December 2021 is the most recent quarterly data available.

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Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 9

"The ACTING CHAIR: How many children, Minister, are currently in the care of NGOs that have your NGO short-term indemnity scheme applying?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I will have to ask Ms Campbell or take that on notice. I do not have that figure in front of me.

The ACTING CHAIR: And how many children are there with NGOs who do not have insurance cover at all as at today?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Ms Campbell, do you have that figure?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I think we need to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I will take it on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 10

"SIMONE CZECH: The numbers fluctuate week on week—sometimes on a day-by-day basis—and we need to apply some aging and checking of data. So 31 December is the most recent data that we have the utmost confidence in providing to this Committee. But, like I said, the numbers do fluctuate.

The ACTING CHAIR: I would just like the data you have, the most recent data.

SIMONE CZECH: The most recent data is the 70, which is, as the Minister mentioned earlier, at 31 December 2021.

The ACTING CHAIR: I know that prior Ministers required a weekly update on the number of children in alternative care. Has that practice now ceased since we have the new Minister? Ms Czech?

SIMONE CZECH: I might let the Minister answer that.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I am able to ask for any updates and, if you would like an up-to-date figure as of today, I can take that on notice and come back to you."

Answer

I am advised:

Please see response provided to question taken on notice, transcript page 9.

Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 11

"SIMONE CZECH: The median length of stay is 32 days and, again, these figures are at 31 December 2021. That is a decrease from the quarter before—the end of September quarter—which was 42 days. In terms of other lengths of stay: 75.9 per cent of children exit within three months; 15.5 per cent exit within three to six months; 8.3 per cent exit within six to 12 months; and 0.2 per cent, more than 12 months. I do have the number of children in each of those categories.

The ACTING CHAIR: Could you table that document, Ms Czech?

SIMONE CZECH: Absolutely."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

People with Disability

Transcript Page 17

"Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Understood, but people with disability are facing particular challenges. We know from experience that that funding does not get to where it is needed in time. Are we going to do things differently this time?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I have a meeting coming up with the disability Ministers, and I am more than happy to raise it as an agenda item.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. What will you do to ensure that people with a disability are included in future disaster planning?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Obviously, we have the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan and, like with all plans and action plans, there are opportunities to review things. So I am more than happy to look at that further and take it on notice to see where there are opportunities for us to expand and provide more support."

Answer

I am advised:

Questions regarding the emergency response to natural disasters should be directed to the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience.

I am, however, advised that Resilience NSW has collaborated with the Centre for Disability Research and Policy team at the University of Sydney to support the development and continued rollout of resources to support engagement and preparedness for people with disability.

Crisis Accommodation for Domestic and Family Violence

Transcript Page 19

"Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We know that the lack of crisis accommodation for domestic and family violence is widespread across the State. That is one of the reasons that we have the commitment to increase that with the Core and Cluster. That is great, but women in particular in rural areas face very significant challenges when it comes to fleeing domestic and family violence. Do you have any figures, I guess, around what the capacity is within particular areas and where the hotspots are?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, we do have that data. So I am happy to take that on notice and provide that.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be very useful."

Answer

I am advised:

During 2020-21, Specialist Homelessness Services in NSW provided 5,450 women and children experiencing DFV with crisis accommodation. Out of this:

- 61% were located in Major Cities
- 30.5% were located in Inner Regional areas
- 7% were located in Outer Regional areas
- 0.5% were located in Remote areas
- 1% were located in Very Remote areas

Data Source: AIHW SHS Client CURF 2020-21 and Remoteness Areas from the ABS

Temporary accommodation for Flood victims

Transcript Page 20-21

“PAUL VEVERS: Probably not in the short term, no, because I am hoping that we will be able to get some short-term accommodation. But if they need private rental or social housing, there are so few options in that region. I totally do not mean to sound insensitive to the fact that some of those people may have lived a long time in that region, so we will work with people. But we did find before that to get long-term accommodation we had to look further inland to places like Casino and in some cases further south, even down as far south as Newcastle. It is not ideal, but the private rental market gives us very few options there.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Can you understand how heartbreaking that is, Minister? Mr Vevera mentioned the private rental market, but he also mentioned the limited availability of social housing. There are people who have now been through the 2017 floods and these floods, and the department's response to them is, "You have to move away from the place that you've called home, where you have friends, potentially family, employment and kids going to school. You have to move to Casino or Lismore if you want to find long-term housing". Do you understand how heartbreaking that would be for people?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: This is a devastating situation that is occurring, and my heart goes out to every family and individual that is affected. As the situation is still unfolding, it is difficult to outline particularly the number of properties that would be available. But I am happy to take it on notice and come back to the Committee once we know a little bit more information in the coming days and weeks."

Answer

I am advised:

On Thursday 10th March 2022, the Premier announced \$10 million for the supply and maintenance of temporary accommodation provided through mobile motor homes, which will be managed by Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). The NSW Rural Fire Service is providing volunteer drivers to transport the motorhomes to Northern NSW.

DCJ on behalf of Resilience NSW, is providing emergency accommodation to any person displaced by the floods

As at 10 March 2022, there have been 1,631 calls received from disaster affected people due to the recent floods, with 1,581 people placed in emergency accommodation.

DCJ Housing is continuing to actively source any available accommodation in flood impacted areas and surrounding towns to use for emergency accommodation.

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Other short and medium-term housing options are being established, including:

- Rentstart assistance – up to four weeks Bond Loan and two weeks advance rent
- a link to available AirBnB homes for properties that could be made available free of charge or at cost. Referrals will be managed through Red Cross to broker this option with AirBnB hosts.
- accommodation at Sport and Recreation camps in three locations – Camp Koinonia, Lake Ainsworth Sport and Recreation Centre and Camp Drew; all approximately 40 kms from Lismore
- Mobile Motor Homes for people displaced by floods so that they can remain close to their homes whilst clean up and repair is being undertaken
- On 11 March 2022, 20 motorhomes were transported to Casino and households took occupancy from Sunday 13 March onwards
- Additional motorhomes have been transported to the Northern Rivers region and have been set up at sites as close to Lismore as possible

Longer term housing solutions are being explored with people that have been displaced by floods through a variety of tools:

- DCJ Housing Flood Recovery Service – on site presence in Northern NSW as well as virtual team that will work closely with people in emergency accommodation to determine an exit plan to longer term accommodation options
- Social Housing properties – where available and appropriate, accommodation in social housing properties will be considered for eligible clients

DCJ is visiting tenants affected by the current floods and is prioritising seniors for these visits. The purpose of this is to ensure tenants have necessary supports in place and to assess any further needs that may need to be met to ensure tenants are safe in their home

DCJ is liaising closely with the NSW Land and Housing Corporation property assessors to ensure that public housing dwellings occupied by seniors are inspected for damage and required repairs are completed as a priority.

On 10 March 2022 the government announced that the Commonwealth and NSW governments will provide more than \$551.7 million for flood-affected communities with \$285 million to support the Temporary Housing Support Package. The \$285 million Temporary Housing Support Package will provide accommodation support to flood victims who have lost their homes to ensure people can access more immediate and medium-term accommodation support.

The housing support package has the capacity to assist around 25,000 households and will be focused on allowing people to move out of their emergency accommodation and find a more permanent place to call home. They will also have access to up to 16 weeks rental support, by the end of March. \$248 Million for a

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payment to up to 25,000 households to assist with temporary accommodation while their home is uninhabitable.

Together Home

Transcript Page 21

"The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That is good. Thank you, Mr Vevers. I wanted to ask about Together Home, Minister. How many packages are currently available?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The exact number of packages I will have to take on notice. But what I can say is that through the \$122 million investment in the Together Home program, over 1,000 people have been supported who have been sleeping rough."

Answer

I am advised:

The Together Home Program consist of 1,054 leasing and support packages being delivered across three tranches, made up of 404 (in Tranche 1), 400 (in Tranche 2) and 250 (in Tranche 3) plus 17 packages in the Aboriginal led model (DCJ funded) for total of 1,071 packages.

Aboriginal Knowledge Circle

Transcript Page 26

"BRENDAN THOMAS: My understanding was the Government's position was published prior to the establishment of the Knowledge Circle so I do not believe the Knowledge Circle was asked subsequent to that on that particular government position.

The ACTING CHAIR: Will you provide on notice the minutes of all the meetings of the Knowledge Circle?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I would have to take that on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: You will take it on notice?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: First of all I would have take it on notice as to whether or not the minutes are actually taken and whether or not they are available.

The ACTING CHAIR: Surely minutes are taken, are they not?

BRENDAN THOMAS: Yes, they are.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes, we can take that on notice then."

Answer

I am advised:

The Aboriginal Knowledge Circle records minutes for all meetings. These meetings are advisory in nature. Under the NSW Government Boards and Committee Guidelines policy, recorded minutes are not required to be publicly available.

Out of Home Care

Transcript Page 28

"The ACTING CHAIR: I can. But while I am asking you that and while you are looking at data, it is obvious that I will be asking for the breakdown between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and length of stay in out-of-home care and we will come back to that. Minister, when your department last provided answers about the proportion of child protection money allocated to child protection that went into Family Preservation programs the answer was 16 per cent. What proportion of child protection money is now being directed into Family Preservation programs?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I do not have that exact figure in front of me, but if the department has that at hand? Otherwise we will take it on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: Does anybody know?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I have not got the percentage but I have got the figures. But I am happy to take that on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: If you give me the figures I will do the percentage. How about that?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. It is \$13.4 million for Family Preservation services, and that includes \$2.8 million for MST-CAN and FSP casework; \$2.6 million for Brighter Futures; \$3.3 million to Waminda - South Coast Women's Health & Welfare Aboriginal Corporation for the Nabu pilot program; \$129.4 million for the Permanency Support Program, and in that 14 Aboriginal community-controlled organisations plus four Aboriginal partnerships, and all those organisations also deliver the PSP Family Preservation packages; and there is obviously \$2.41 million to NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation. That is as of June last year.

The ACTING CHAIR: Is that what is budgeted for this year?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would need to take that on notice. Obviously there is quite a bit of work happening, particularly in the Family Preservation program and we are about to do the recommissioning of the Permanency Support Program to increase the number of Aboriginal-controlled community organisations.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Campbell, my question is: Is that what had been spent in the 12 months up to June of last year or is it what has been budgeted to be spent in the 12 months from 1 July?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Spent until June 2021.

The ACTING CHAIR: We are here for budget estimates, so I am asking you how much money is budgeted in the current year's budget to support families in the child protection space and you cannot answer it. Is that right? No-one can answer it?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I could say at a minimum it is the same as last year, but I am happy to take that on notice, Mr Shoebridge. "

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Answer

I am advised:

The 2021-22 Budget invests \$129 million for family preservation programs.

Out of Home Care

Transcript Page 28-29

"The ACTING CHAIR: Minister, I am asking you about the money and it seems nobody sitting around the table has the first idea about how much is budgeted this year on that, which I have got to say in a budget estimates hearing I find extraordinary. I have never seen this before in any department, to have nobody sitting around the table who can talk about the budget allocation for this year on a key program, in this case preventing families from falling into dysfunction and kids being removed. I have never seen this before. Can you explain it?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: As I said, it has been said that the \$828 million that is going into the Family Support Program, that will be taken on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Campbell, you told me how much was being spent on some form of family support and how much was then spent on the removals—out-of-home care, caseworkers and the removals?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would need to take that on notice, Mr Shoebridge."

Answer

I am advised:

In 2021-22, the budget for services to support children before they are taken into care was \$920.5 million. This includes:

- \$164 million Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) for services that support children, young people, families and communities experiencing or at risk of vulnerability.
- \$756.5 million for child protection services. This includes statutory child protection interventions and assessment of child abuse and neglect and supports to keep children safely at home preventing entries to out-of-home care. It also includes early intervention services such as Family Connect and Support and family preservation services like Brighter Futures, Youth Hope, Intensive family preservation and Multi-systemic Therapy for Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) and Family Functioning Therapy – Child Welfare (FFT-CW).

In 2021/22, the OOHC and permanency support budget was \$1.4 billion. This includes services to support the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of vulnerable children in out-of-home care and support as well as permanency outcomes including restoring children to families, or permanent, legal guardianship or adoption.

Supported Accommodation and homeless services in Shoalhaven-Illawarra

Transcript Page 30-31

"The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think we will talk about that program with Corrective Services this afternoon, but thanks, Mr Vevers. Minister, I wanted to ask about the supported accommodation and homeless services in Shoalhaven-Illawarra. I wonder if you have had any engagement with this service. This is a service that, it was publicly reported, almost lost their premises late last year and now have only secured a 12-month extension on their lease. Are you aware of this issue?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: To my knowledge they have not written to me but, because it was a matter that did arise under the previous Minister, I might ask if the department has anything specific they would like to raise in relation to this and what happened historically.

ANNE CAMPBELL: I am not exactly sure which service you are talking about but I do understand there was a service that needed to relocate down there, and I think the issue was to do with Land and Housing Corp and a particular need to redevelop that particular house. But I would need to take it on notice—the specifics.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think we are talking about different services. They definitely have written to you, Minister, although I accept you would receive lot of correspondence. This is a service that is in fact in the Shoalhaven—the only provider of the homeless hub housing support that people who access temporary accommodation are required to access support from. Are you familiar with how—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: As I said, I have not seen that correspondence but I am happy to take it on notice and look into it.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: As we have heard in relation to other questions, the South Coast and southern New South Wales experience pretty serious housing stress. This is the only service that is providing temporary accommodation housing support in the Shoalhaven. They have got a 12-month extension on their lease, although that is going to end this year. They are actually only available four days a week. They are not even open on Monday. Do you take on to meet with them and talk to them about the limited services that they are able to provide?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: As I said to you, I have not seen that correspondence. I will look at the correspondence, take it on notice and, whatever they are requesting, I will certainly look at. If they are looking to have a meeting, I am more than happy to do that. As I said, I have not seen the correspondence. If you have got a copy, I am happy to take that now. Otherwise, I assume it has been emailed through to my—"

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Answer

- I visited the Supported Accommodation and Homelessness Services Illawarra (SAHSSI) Homeless Hub in Nowra on 17 March 2022 to discuss the issues SAHSSI is facing finding a new property.

I am advised:

- The Shoalhaven Homeless Hub has operated for 23 years from a premises in Nowra through a lease from the local Catholic Diocese at well below market value.
- In November 2021, SAHSSI CEO notified DCJ that the Church had issued an order to vacate the hub by January 2022, however after further negotiation, the Church revised the lease term to 12 months expiring February 2023.
- DCJ understands that SAHSSI are doing everything they can to resolve the situation, however the limited budget means that there is a real risk of the Hub closing, without further financial support.
- The current availability of private and commercial lease properties in Nowra is limited with estimated rental costs of a suitable property ranging from \$35,000 to \$48,000 pa.

Transition from large residential centres to non-government disability support services

Transcript Page 31

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: For people who have transitioned from large residential centres to non-government disability support services, is the New South Wales Government keeping track of those residents and the level of care that they are now receiving?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I would need to take that on notice as to what is being tracked."

Answer

I am advised:

This is a matter for the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commissioner. The NSW Government does not track former Large Residential Centre residents who now live in the community supported by Australian Government administered programs.

Complaints to the Ageing and Disability Commissioner

Transcript Page 32-33

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What does the New South Wales commissioner who Ms Campbell mentioned do?

ANNE CAMPBELL: That is around individual complaints that people may have across aging and disability. Within New South Wales, we have funded the Disability Advocacy program to support people and for them to have someone to go to if they do need systemic advocacy in terms of issues. We do not have access to any of the details around individual NDIS participants that are New South Wales participants. Particularly through the pandemic, we have worked really closely at an officer level and at a Minister level to ensure that the NDIA and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services have the right supports in place for people with disability living in those group homes, which included regular fortnightly meetings, particularly during the COVID outbreak in the first round, to ensure access to vaccinations and PPE. We had issues in a number of the disability group homes operated through the NDIA, where staff and clients became COVID positive and a number of staff had to be furloughed. NSW Health and the local health districts stepped in and helped provide the support to residents in those group homes. It is a very cooperative relationship between the NDIA, New South Wales and the Commonwealth Government about New South Wales NDIS participants.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Who is responsible for the commissioner? Does that fall within your department?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many complaints has the commissioner received?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I would have to take that on notice. Could you also specify the time frame you are looking at?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In the last year."

Answer

I am advised:

This is a matter for the Ageing and Disability Commission.

Homelessness Funding

Transcript Page 33

"The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I wanted to ask about funding for frontline services. As you would be aware, the one-off COVID funding boosts are about to expire or in fact have expired.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Could you clarify if you are talking about housing or homelessness, because my portfolio covers a range of things from Youth Justice through?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Specifically homelessness services, although I understand other DCJ-funded services also received funding boosts during COVID. My understanding is that the grants were required to be expended either by the end of last year or I think in some of the regional areas it is February this year. The requirements are that the funding that was provided through the COVID one-off funding grants is about to expire. Services are incredibly stressed and stretched. They have seen considerable increases in a number of areas, particularly regional areas, as we were discussing, in relation to presentations. Has any consideration been given to continuing some of that boosted funding, at least for 2022?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I might ask the department to comment in relation to the funding ending.

ANNE CAMPBELL: So far the New South Wales Government has committed more than \$950 million as part of the COVID-19 response and also the economic recovery strategy, with \$40 million for private rental subsidies, and they are continuing; \$64 million for temporary accommodation; \$3 million for emergency accommodation is continuing; and more than \$62 million as part of the joint Commonwealth and State funding for domestic and family violence services. Mr Vevers talked about the \$122.1 million, which was a stimulus response, and that operates until, I think the next tranche starts this year, so that will be over a two-year period. There has also been some brokerage dollars for the Homelessness Youth Assistance Program, about \$1.45 million, and I do not think that is all expended at this point. They are the key things. Some of those are still operating but I can take on notice how much is remaining this financial year."

Answer

I am advised:

The remaining balance of the Stimulus Budget funding to be spent in 2021/22 is \$96 million. At the end of February 2022, the actual year to date spending was \$252 million, per finance reporting. The main components remaining to be spent are in the following: Private Rental Assistance, Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund, Together Home Tranche 3, Social Sector Support Fund and Extreme Hardship Support Program.

Transition from large residential centres to non-government disability support services

Transcript Page 35-36

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: But the point is that there have been a number of reports of former residents dying after they have been transferred into new care, if you like. People who had worked in the sector had reported to the previous Minister, Minister Ward, that a number of those residents were dying at a higher rate than you would normally expect. Is that something that the department has looked at on receipt of those complaints from those workers?

PAUL VEVERS: I can tell you that we have seen no evidence that mortality is higher than would have been expected. The residents of those large residential centres are incredibly vulnerable people. That is why we were so careful in the transition process. We had every single member of staff who knew them around a table for half a day to work with the new providers to make sure that medical treatment continued and that support continued for them. It is tragically true that some residents passed away after the move, but I have seen absolutely no evidence that that was at a greater rate than existed before.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. I am not reflecting on that, but nurses who had worked in the sector raised these issues in late June 2019 with Minister Ward. Minister, I know it was before your time, but what investigations did your department make of those complaints to satisfy itself that the concerns were baseless? I note Mr Vever's evidence, but given the State Government is no longer monitoring this, how can Mr Vever or your department be so sure about these matters?

The Hon. NATASHAMACLAREN-JONES: As I said, it goes back to the previous Minister of 2019. I think it would be best to take it on notice to actually look at it because it is historical."

Answer

I am advised:

Concerns raised in June 2019 with then Minister Ward alleging that clients had died or would die as a result of the transition to a new home were examined and found to be baseless. A small number of residents passed away following their transition to a new home but the transition was found not to be a causal factor. The prevalent factors related to ageing and documented end of life plans.

The Department worked with each of the Supported Independent Living Providers throughout the period and staff who knew and worked with the clients transferred with the clients as a safeguarding mechanism. Feedback from clients, services, staff and families was that clients thrived in their new environments.

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The responsibilities for monitoring services funded through the NDIA rests with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and Supported Independent Living Providers are required to report client deaths to the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission and the NSW Police.

Disability Action Plan

Transcript Page 36-37

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Minister, one of the Premier's Priorities was to increase public sector employment of persons with disabilities to 5.6 per cent. Does that remain in place?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes. As I said previously, I do have a regular meeting with representatives from the department to look at implementation of the disability action plans. The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Last year when I asked the former Minister about this, he said, "'I have a plan in my head. It is not a written plan.'" Is there a written plan now to tackle this issue, given that in 2014 it was 3 per cent in the public sector, it has gone back to 2.5 per cent and your target is 5.6 per cent? You are moving in entirely the wrong direction. Do you have a written plan?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: As I said, I have a regular meeting. It was raised at the last meeting, and I will continue to focus on it—unless the department has something specific to comment on.

ANNE CAMPBELL: I am happy to comment on that. Obviously that priority is led by the Public Service Commission. In 2017 the Government launched the plan, Jobs for people with disability: A plan for the NSW public sector, which, as you indicated, aims to ensure that 5.6 per cent of government sector roles are held by people with disability. From April 2019 to September 2020, the Public Service Commission led the work to deliver the jobs for people with disability program to meet one of the Premier's Priorities. I will not go through all those, but I am happy to provide more detail. There is, obviously, the New South Wales Disability Inclusion Act, which aims to promote independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability. There is, obviously, a plan in place in relation to that. Obviously, within the Department of Communities and Justice, we are looking at the employment participation for people with a disability as a priority. I could go through a list of the initiatives—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: No, if you could table those. "

Answer

I am advised:

To support the Premier's Priority 14 World Class Public Service, the Public Service Commission has led a program of work that has focussed on recruitment and retention, leadership, awareness and culture change, accessible workspaces and systems and tools.

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To underpin the requirement to promote employment, the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 aims to promote the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025 was launched on 19 November 2021. The Plan provides a whole of Government strategy aligned with the objects and principles of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014.

One of the four focus areas of the Plan is ‘Supporting access to meaningful employment’.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan is supported by the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and the nine NSW Government cluster and 128 local councils Disability Inclusion Action Plans.

The NSW Government agencies’ Disability Inclusion Action Plans list actions to support increased employment for people with disability and all local councils have disability inclusion action plans aligned with this disability employment priority.

The NSW Government is also working in partnership with the Commonwealth Government to support the implementation of the NDIS Participant Employment Strategy 2019 – 2022.

Out of Home Care

Transcript Page 37

"SIMONE CZECH: Excellent. Thank you, Mr Shoebridge. The most recent data we have is 31 December 2021. On that date there were 15,515 children in out-of-home care. Of that 15,515, there were 6,783 Aboriginal children, which equates to 44 per cent. That is 380 less children overall, as compared to the end of September 2021. They were those earlier figures we provided, which I think from memory was 15,895. There has been a small reduction in the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. I say ""small"" because it was 46 children less. In September it was 6,829. At 31 December it is 6,783. You also asked a question about the length of time children are in care. This is information we do collate annually. We collate it at the point of exit. We can absolutely provide the Committee with a full breakdown. But just briefly, we had in 2021—that is the most recent annual capture—2,557 children exit out-of-home care. Of that 2,557, 1,273—50 per cent—had been in care for five years or more. Then an Aboriginal breakdown—similar, but 51 per cent, 1,520, more than five years for Aboriginal children. But we can provide a much more detailed breakdown for you, Mr Shoebridge, if that is helpful.

The ACTING CHAIR: That would be helpful. Ms Czech, do you know how many of the 2,557 who exited care aged out of care? How many of them turned 18?

SIMONE CZECH: My understanding is that does not include those children that aged out. Sorry. Can I take that on notice just to double-check that?"

Answer

I am advised:

A correction is required to the record. The Deputy Secretary quoted figures of 15,895 children in OOHC (6,829 of which were Aboriginal children) being as at September 2021. However, these figures relate to data as at 30 June 2021.

It should be noted, the 2,557 figure refers to children who had stayed in OOHC for 1 month or more and then exited OOHC. The breakdown of the 2,557 children who exited OOHC during 2020-21 by Aboriginal status and length of time in OOHC are as follows:

- 1 month to less than 6 months: 131 Aboriginal, 158 non-Aboriginal
- 6 months to less than 1 year: 100 Aboriginal, 145 non-Aboriginal
- 1 to less than 2 years: 114 Aboriginal, 164 non-Aboriginal
- 2 to less than 5 years: 164 Aboriginal, 308 non-Aboriginal
- 5 or more years: 528 Aboriginal, 745 non-Aboriginal

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The above data is reported in the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services 2022.

There were 131 children who exited OOHC in 2020-21 that were in OOHC for less than 1 month (not included in the above data). Note that ROGS 2022 reports that the total exits of children in OOHC for 2020-21 in NSW was 2,688.

Youth Justice Centres

Transcript Page 38

"The ACTING CHAIR: How many young people aged 14 to 17?

PAUL O'REILLY: I do not know exactly, but 24 per cent of our people in custody are over 18 or 18 and over. That is very consistent, that rate.

The ACTING CHAIR: Can you provide me on notice that breakdown, if you can, by year, for last year?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes."

Answer

I am advised:

The average daily number of young people in 2020/21:

10-13 years – 6

14-17 years – 140

18+ years – 55

Youth Justice Centres

Transcript Page 38

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you know how many children were aged 10 that were held in detention last year?

PAUL O'REILLY: Aged 10? Zero. If I could just correct that. The figure I have is children aged under 12 for the whole year was six.

The ACTING CHAIR: Six 10- and/or 11-year-olds?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you know what proportion of those 138 children aged 10, 11, 12 and 13 in detention were Aboriginal?

PAUL O'REILLY: No.

The ACTING CHAIR: Can you provide that on notice?

PAUL O'REILLY: We can certainly provide that.

The ACTING CHAIR: Can you tell me what was the average length of stay—"detention", I suppose, is the proper word. What was the average length of detention for those very young children? I am talking about the same—10, 11, 12 or 13.

PAUL O'REILLY: The breakdown by each year, 10, 11 and 12?

The ACTING CHAIR: If you could.

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, I can do that."

Answer

I am advised:

61 of the 138 (44.2%) young people aged 10 to 13 admitted into custody between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021 were Aboriginal.

Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, the average number of days that a young person aged 10-13 years was detained in custody was six days.

Disaggregated by age, the average number of days that a young person was detained in custody in 2020/21 was;

- 10 years - 0 days
- 11 years - 3.8 days
- 12 years - 3.1 days
- 13 years - 7.1 days.

Child Abuse cases

Transcript Page 44

"The ACTING CHAIR: Are you aware that the Law Society then just farmed those matters out to general practitioners and they did not go to accredited specialists or firms that had experience in abuse, particularly child abuse, matters?

SIMONE CZECH: I was not aware of that, Mr Shoebridge, but I am more than happy to follow that up and come back to the Committee with a response.

The ACTING CHAIR: That is my understanding of what has happened, and I think you would agree that if you are dealing with vulnerable young adults, 18-, 19-year-old young adults, the idea that they would simply be referred to generalist solicitors without expertise in abuse cases is letting those young adults down. I think we would agree with that.

SIMONE CZECH: I would certainly hope that those matters are considered by someone who has a level of experience and expertise in order to process those claims. I will take it on notice to clarify that particular question."

Answer

I am advised:

The Law Society of NSW is responsible for the Specialist Legal Practitioners Panel for Minors and Young Adults in Civil Claims against the State and/or Other Bodies ('the Panel').

The Expression of Interest for the current Panel, required legal practitioners seeking inclusion to meet the following criteria:

- At least five years' recent demonstrated expertise and experience in personal injury law and the application of the Civil Liability Act 2002 (NSW)
- Demonstrated in-depth understanding of the application of the Model Litigant Policy for Civil Litigation and the NSW Government Guiding Principles for Government Agencies Responding to Civil Claims for Child Abuse (Guiding Principles)
- Demonstrated in-depth understanding of the application of the Model Litigant Policy for Civil Litigation and the NSW Government Guiding Principles for Government Agencies Responding to Civil Claims for Child Abuse (Guiding Principles)
- Demonstrated ability to undertake and deliver legal services competently, diligently and as promptly as reasonably possible, including in accordance with the Guiding Principles;
- Extensive experience in alternative dispute resolution including a minimum of 25 hours experience in ADR the last two years;

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- Demonstrated experience working and communicating with vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, and have an understanding of the impact of trauma upon them; and
- Demonstrated empathy and patience in dealing with vulnerable clients effectively and a demonstrated understanding of and an ability to address cross-cultural issues and to identify where capacity, ethical or other issues arise.

In 2020, DCJ received notice that a young person had been referred by the Law Society to a general personal injury lawyer and raised this with the Law Society of NSW. That person was re-referred by the Law Society to a Panel legal practitioner. In 2021, the Law Society commenced a warm referral process for young people, where they introduce the young person to the legal practitioner on the panel.

Child Abuse cases

Transcript Page 44

"The ACTING CHAIR: In the event you confirm the information that has been provided to my office, from highly credible sources, will you undertake to revisit those matters that have gone through that process to ensure that those young people get access to specialised legal advice to assist them?

SIMONE CZECH: We can certainly look at the options. Like I said, we need to understand the current state of play in regards to that, but certainly we can have a look at that."

Answer

I am advised:

Please see response provided directly above to transcript page 44.

Child Abuse cases

Transcript Page 44

The ACTING CHAIR: Could I ask you why the previous guardian ad litem structure was disassembled?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Mr Shoebridge, we have had some discussions about this over lunch and clearly I have a lot to learn—heavy is the head that wears the crown—and we need to make inquiry about that. We honestly do not know. That is the answer at this point. But happy to take it on notice and report back.

The ACTING CHAIR: I think one of the most critical things to do initially, Mr Tidball, is to find out what is happening right now and ensure that if there are cases being referred, they go to accredited specialists, or at least firms that have acknowledged specialty in the space. I understand you will take that issue on notice.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I am able to follow that up, yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: And then if you could provide on notice the number of cases that were being referred annually in the three final years of the arrangements leading up to 2019?

SIMONE CZECH: We can do that.

The ACTING CHAIR: And the numbers that have been referred since?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes.

SIMONE CZECH: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: If you could, could you also provide what the current arrangements are?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Of course."

Answer

I am advised:

In relation to the previous guardian ad litem structure:

Between 2015 and 2017 there was a review of the MoU appointing guardian ad litem to obtain a merit advice on potential claims against the state.

In late 2017, the former Department of Family and Community Services entered into an arrangement with the Law Society of NSW for the establishment of the Panel referred to in the response to transcript page 44.

The Panel commenced in March 2019.

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Young people with a potential claim identified in an audit are notified of this and can seek a referral from the Law Society to a legal practitioner who has the appropriate expertise and experience in these claims and in working with young people who have experienced trauma.

Where a young person lacks capacity, the legal practitioner, can take instructions from their next friend or from a Financial Manager appointed by NCAT under the Guardianship Act 1987.

Data relating to children and young person files is not publically available.

Claims made against the Department for breach of duty in care

Transcript Page 45-46

"The ACTING CHAIR: Thank you for that. Do we know how many claims have been made against the department in the last calendar year—or if you have it by financial year, in the last financial year—in relation to compensation for breach of duty in care?

SIMONE CZECH: Not numbers of claims, but we can certainly take that on notice and provide further information to the Committee. What we do know for the last financial year was 2.9 per cent of children in statutory out-of-home care had a substantiation of abuse by a caregiver. A caregiver can include a foster parent, a relative or kin carer or a residential care worker. Each of those matters is also audited to assess the eligibility for a claim.

The ACTING CHAIR: I am trying to work out how, if there are 15,500 kids in out-of-home care and 2.9 per cent of the kids in care had a substantiated instance of abuse, only 44 matters were referred to external lawyers for compensation. When I just did the maths, 2.9 per cent of 15,515 is substantially more than 44.

SIMONE CZECH: They will be at varying points in the process of auditing their files and the circumstances regarding those allegations and subsequent substantiation. I am happy to provide the Committee with further information about the status of those.

The ACTING CHAIR: Ms Czech, I assume that in any given year of the cohort of historical claims of abuse, they will all be at different stages about whether they are able to be referred off.

SIMONE CZECH: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: But I doubt that last year is remarkably different to previous years in terms of the substantiated instances of abuse. It may be slightly more, it may be slightly less.

SIMONE CZECH: Yes, true.

The ACTING CHAIR: But we are talking 450 kids at 2.9 per cent and only 44 referrals—10 per cent.

SIMONE CZECH: Like I said, I would have to come back with further detail on that 2.9 per cent. I am happy to do that to provide that to the Committee in terms of where they are up to in the audit process.

The ACTING CHAIR: But then we have the same claims from last year and the same claims from the year before and historically, if you have got 2.9 per cent of cases having substantiated complaints, historically you have still only got 44 being referred out in this year, which covers those historical claims as well. Anyhow, you will come back on notice to square those two figures.

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SIMONE CZECH: Yes, of course. Like I said, it is absolutely a reasonable question to ask and something, like I said, I am worried about. So we are looking into it and we will provide the Committee with further information. I want children in out-of-home care to be free from abuse, but also, where they have been subjected to a criminal act, they are in receipt of, in particular, compensation but also support.

The ACTING CHAIR: And of those 2.9 per cent, can you give us the exact number on notice and how many of them were complaints about care while with an NGO and how many of them were complaints about care with the department?

SIMONE CZECH: Of course. We can take that on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

Data relating to children and young person' files is not publically available.

532 children in out-of-home-care (OOHC) in 2020-21 were the subject of a substantiation of abuse (where the person responsible was living in the household).

Foster Care Placements

Transcript Page 46

"The ACTING CHAIR: It is a pretty brutal eighteenth birthday present, isn't it—being thrown out of your foster care home? But do we know how many young people when they turned 18 got thrown out of their foster home?

SIMONE CZECH: I might get my colleague, Ms Campbell, to respond to this question. But we do know that children are not necessarily thrown out of foster homes. Many children actually stay with either their relative kin carer or foster carers. I know there has been work in Ms Campbell's area around this issue, so I might ask her to follow on from me if that is okay.

ANNE CAMPBELL: You asked the question around numbers. I might need to take that on notice to see if we do have that breakdown of data about where kids that did leave out-of-home care and did not remain within their foster care placement or residential placement, moved to."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Children leaving care

Transcript Page 46

"The ACTING CHAIR: Their foster care placement ends, doesn't it? Happy birthday, foster care placement ended.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Not for all. It is on a case-by-case basis. For some children and young people, particularly if they are still at school, we have discretion to continue to make that foster care payment, if they are over 18.

The ACTING CHAIR: For 10 weeks?

SIMONE CZECH: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR: And then it ends.

SIMONE CZECH: Again, it would depend on the individual circumstances. There are leaving care payments and aftercare services where we can provide additional funding for education and financial support. We also have a program called the Premier's Youth Initiative, which targets young people leaving out-of-home care and provides accommodation and wraparound supports to enable young people to continue education or move into employment options.

The ACTING CHAIR: Can you provide on notice what the total collective financial contribution was to kids in their first year, having left care? And then the number of kids that it was provided to?

ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. I can take that on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you know how many kids left care into homelessness?

ANNE CAMPBELL: We are hoping that no child left care into homelessness.

The ACTING CHAIR: That was not my question, though.

ANNE CAMPBELL: We can look at the data. We will come back to you on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Children leaving care

Transcript Page 47

"The ACTING CHAIR: There are about 5,500 young adults aged between 18 and 25 who have exited out of home care when they turned 18. How many of those kids got support last year?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would need to take that on notice. All of them should have had access to supports."

Answer

I am advised:

This data is not publically available.

Young people who have left care may have received financial assistance from Communities and Justice or other assistance including access or referral to:

- Specialist Aftercare program
- employment and training opportunities like Smart and Skilled, education scholarships and targeted traineeships
- youth housing options or help to access private rental
- referral to mental health and wellbeing programs
- targeted services like Foyer Central and mentoring programs.

Young people can seek support and assistance at any time through the NSW Care Leavers line on 1800 994686 or careleaversline@dcj.nsw.gov.au. This line helps young people with requests for support and information, and to navigate the system

Foster Care / Homelessness

Transcript Page 47

"The ACTING CHAIR: One of the really good ways of checking if that is working is to know how many kids went into homelessness. But we do not track that data. Is that right, Ms Campbell?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would need to take that on notice and see if we have got the ability to do that."

Answer

I am advised:

In 2020-21, of the 70,588 clients assisted by specialist homelessness services across Australia, 244 clients identified their reason for seeking assistance as 'Transition from foster care and child safety residential placements'. (The age of these clients is not published.)

Guardianship Orders in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Transcript Page 48

"The ACTING CHAIR: Good. Ms Czech, I am about to run out of time for this round. I will just ask the other questions. Of the guardianship orders in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, how many were made in respect of non-Aboriginal guardians? Could you provide that?

SIMONE CZECH: Yes."

Answer

I am advised:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) is a national framework developed to promote Aboriginal culture and family connections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

DCJ wherever possible follows the ATSIPP for Aboriginal children in OOHC in the following order: child's family or kin, child's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers. Where an

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Aboriginal child cannot be placed with family, kin, community or an Aboriginal person, they may be placed with a 'suitable person approved by the 'Executive District Director', only after consultation with family and a relevant Aboriginal organisation.

In 2020-21 there were 179 Aboriginal children who exited to Guardianship. Information on the Aboriginal status of guardians is not publically available.

Together Home

Transcript page 48

“The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Mr Vevers, we might go back to Together Home, because I just wanted to clarify some of those figures. I think you said that there were 1,000 packages available, as it were, and 600 and something that were taken at the moment. Can you just clarify those figures?”

PAUL VEVERS: It is around 1,000. I should take that on notice to give you the exact figure, but it is there or thereabouts.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That would be great.”

Answer

I am advised:

As of 11 February 2022, 84% or 690 clients have been housed and 98% or 804 clients have been provided with support services from 821 Together Home leasing/support packages (figures include T1, T2 and Aboriginal led model packages). Note newly rolled out Tranche 3 or 250 packages is not yet included in these figures.

Link2Home

Transcript Page 53

"Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Fair enough, thank you. I have a few questions that you may need to take on notice, but I will put them out there and see what happens. Is it possible to give us a breakdown of the caller profile—number and proportion by age and gender—of the people who are interacting with Link2home?

PAUL VEVERS: I think so. We can take on notice whether we can and, if we can, what that is.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay, that would be great. Apologies if one of my colleagues has already covered this. Are you able to provide a detailed breakdown of the number and proportion by age and gender of the current waiting list for housing?

PAUL VEVERS: Yes, on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

The below information provides caller profile data for the 2021 calendar year:

- 15 callers aged under 12: 10 male and 5 female;
- 3,833 callers aged 12 to 18: 1,496 male and 2,337 female;
- 11,808 callers aged 19 to 24: 5,326 male and 6,482 female;
- 23,461 callers aged 25 to 34: 11,811 male and 11,650 female;
- 23,564 callers aged 35 to 44: 13,368 male and 10,196 female;
- 14,013 callers aged 45 to 54: 8,432 male and 5,581 female;
- 4,617 callers aged 55 to 64: 3,004 male and 1,613 female;
- 1,301 callers aged 65 to 74: 737 male and 564 female and
- 279 callers aged 75 and over: 173 male and 106 female.

The total number of applicants on the social housing waitlist as at 30 June 2021 was 49,328.

Detailed data on the number and proportion by age and gender of the waiting list for social housing at 30 June from 2012 to 2020 is available in the Annual Statistical Report 2019-20:

https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/Annual_Statistical_Report_2019-20_measure_list/Coverpage

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Data as at 30 June 2021 will be available in the Annual Statistical Report 2020-21, to be publicly released from end of March 2022 onwards.

Age	Male	Female	Total
Under 12	2	2	4
12 to 18	314	467	781
19 to 24	887	1283	2170
25 to 34	2033	2262	4295
35 to 44	2077	1890	3967
45 to 54	1442	1048	2490
55 to 64	485	291	776
65 to 74	158	140	298

Housing waitlist for older people

Transcript Page 53-54

"Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: On notice, not out of your head. Excellent. How many people aged 80 years and over on the general waiting list have been added to the priority waiting list in the last five years? Again, perhaps on notice.

PAUL VEVERS: I will certainly take that on notice, yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The gender breakdown, again number and proportion of the people who were added to the priority list upon turning 80 years over the last five years. I am assuming all of these will be taken on notice, but I will put them on the record now because it is easier and you will get the notice quicker. What is the average time for people over 80 years getting housing once they are on that priority list? What is the average time for people over 55 years on the general waiting list across all geographic areas getting housing?

PAUL VEVERS: Understood.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. That would be very helpful. In terms of housing tenants—that one does not make sense to me, so I am just going to put that one on notice once I work it out. How many people over 55 years received Rent Choice? Do you have that?

PAUL VEVERS: I have the total figures, but not by age. So we will have to take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. And a gender breakdown by number and proportion of participants over 55 would be very useful as well. Chair, "

Answer

I am advised:

Data on age breakdown of applicant household heads on the NSW Housing Register at 30 June from 2012 to 2020 is available in the Annual Statistical Report 2019-20: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/Annual_Statistical_Report_2019-20_measure_list/Coverpage

Data on the number of people on the waiting list for social housing as at 30 June 2021 are available in the Annual Statistical Report 2020-21: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/ASR2020-21summarydashboard_16481674309410/Coverpage. Detailed data on the number and proportion by age and gender of the waiting list for social housing at 30 June 2021 will be available in the Annual Statistical Report 2020-21 in April 2022.

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This data counts household heads on the NSW Housing Register at 30 June, however age groupings for household heads aged 80 and over are not separately available

Private properties, complaints and disputes

Transcript Page 54

"The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: What sort of dispute resolution processes do you undertake? Is that through NCAT or do you do that internally?

PAUL VEVERS: No. Ultimately it can go to NCAT, but we seek to do it by negotiation with them.

The **Hon. ROSE JACKSON:** It would be useful, perhaps—perhaps you need to take it on notice—to know the number of, I guess, complaints or disputes that are current in relation to private property owners who have participated in the scheme, who then are seeking some support from DCJ in relation to damage to their property.

PAUL VEVERS: Can I say we will try and get that. It is not a number where I can search the entire database and find out. It would actually require us to go round to all of our offices, which would be quite a time- consuming process.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I understand. Maybe just see what you can do, but I do appreciate that."

Answer

I am advised:

There are currently four disputes that individual private owners have against the Department of Communities and Justice. These are all in relation to Head Lease properties, where the tenant has vacated the property.

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Guardianship order

Transcript Page 56

"**The ACTING CHAIR:** How many of the guardianship orders made in respect of Aboriginal children were made to non-Aboriginal carers?"

SIMONE CZECH: That is a question we will need to take on notice, but we will come back to the Committee on that."

Answer

I am advised:

I refer to my response to the question taken on notice on transcript page 48.

Guardianship model

Transcript Page 57

"The ACTING CHAIR: Can I ask you a specific question on the numbers in the budget? The most recent report on government services had New South Wales Government expenditure on intensive family support services decreasing from \$189 million in 2019-20 to \$129 million in 2020-21. Can you explain why that went down so dramatically?

SIMONE CZECH: I might just refer that to my colleague Ms Campbell to respond to, if that is okay.

ANNE CAMPBELL: I might just go back. I have a bit more detail about the guardianship model that you talked about earlier. In May 2019 the department allocated about \$870,000-odd to AbSec to develop an Aboriginal guardianship support model through a co-design process to test the provision of post-order support to better assist guardians manage the lasting impact of trauma and abuse. Phase one of that model has been completed and we have just had approval to do a trial in the Hunter and south-western Sydney. That is progressing and I am happy to provide more detailed information.

The ACTING CHAIR: If you could put any more information on notice.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes"

Answer

I am advised:

In total, the NSW Government has committed \$3,587,000 funding for the Aboriginal Guardianship Support Model (AGSM) trial. The trial and funding are due to conclude in December 2023. DCJ engaged AbSec to develop a commissioning framework and commission the AGSM.

The two successful providers of the AGSM are:

- Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council in Hunter; and
- Waranwarin Tharawal Child & Family Centre in South Western Sydney.

It is expected that providers will work with approximately 60 children and young people and their guardians in the first year of the trial and 40 in the second, in each area. This service will provide access to safety net provisions guardians have said they have been seeking to ensure they have better outcomes.

Services will be delivered through a community hub, one-stop shop model where guardians will be able to access family support, information and referral, advocacy support, cultural support, community connection support and support through building better local networks.

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A developmental evaluation will be undertaken alongside of the trial to inform any future decisions about the trial.

Family intensive care support services

Transcript Page 57

"**The ACTING CHAIR:** Did you have an answer about the \$60 million reduction in intensive family support services?"

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would need to take that on notice and I am happy to come back to you."

Answer

I am advised:

Please see response to supplementary question 182.

Leaving Care Support

Transcript Page 57-58

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Mr Secretary, just returning to the issue of the support given to young persons after they reach the age of 18, what is the median amount of aftercare support provided to each young person as they exit care?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I do not want to take that on notice, Mr Searle, but I would need some support on that one if that is alright.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is okay. None of these are trick questions. If you can answer it, great. If you cannot, obviously you take it on notice.

SIMONE CZECH: I am almost 100 per cent confident we do not have a median, and that is because each individual's aftercare plan will vary quite wildly.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: You talking of dollar financial support?

The ACTING CHAIR: I think we might all need to move the microphones a little closer.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am talking dollar figures, yes.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: So financial support.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes, financial support. I think your answer is there is no median—

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Well, no. The answer is we will certainly see if we can produce a figure.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is fine. I will move on to the next question while you are thinking about that. Are you able to provide a breakdown of aftercare support expenses by type, for example, is there an aftercare allowance? Are there one-off payments, accommodation support—whatever it is?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: There are and I can indicate, Mr Searle, I know that we can because I wanted to learn about aftercare. I have been reading about the expenditure and the breakdown and we certainly are able to do that. If we have some indication as to what the breakdown is, we are happy to provide that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes, this reveals my ignorance. I do not know what kind of aftercare supports there are. I am in your hands.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I am very happy to undertake to provide to you the line items that I have seen in the funding that I have reviewed.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes, and breakdown by dollar by type.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: My interest in it has been the correlation between the items and the case planning.

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SIMONE CZECH: Just to add to the secretary's comments, Mr Searle, we can definitely provide the type. There is a range of different categories. You actually mentioned some of them just now.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes.

SIMONE CZECH: We will give you that list and we can give you the expenditure against each of those categories. I think we can give you the number of children against each category as well.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. If you could, for financial year to date, insofar as you have and maybe for the previous financial year too just so that we have that component.

SIMONE CZECH: Of course, we can do that. What I do know—and I have not got the figures in front of me—is that the expenditure in aftercare has been increasing year on year. But you will see that when the figures come through."

Answer

I am advised:

Aftercare assistance for those aged 18 and over is divided into three categories. The fortnightly Aftercare Allowance and Post Care Education Financial Support are processed as regular, ongoing payments. The third category is Contingencies or one-off payments. Contingencies include payment to assist with costs associated with the following:

- Birth family contact
- Daily necessities
- Education and training
- Establishment costs
- Legal costs
- Maintain identity and culture
- Medical
- Obtaining a driver's licence
- Official document
- Professional therapy
- Respite / support worker
- Teenage education payment
- Utilities
- Out of guidelines

A breakdown of the amounts is not publically available.

Leaving care

Transcript Page 59

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If care was to be extended to age 21 have you worked out what the average cost per person would be?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I do not have that with me today.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I understand you may not have it with you. If the department has modelled that, I would ask that it be provided on notice.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: And also any modelling that the department may have done about benefits as well as costs? Could you provide whatever work you have done on notice to the Committee, if you can. That would be good. Apart from the issue of cost, because obviously extending care to age 21 would have a financial impact, does the department have any concerns or views against that extension, apart from the issue of cost? Are there any policy downsides to extending care to 21 from the department's perspective?"

Answer

I am advised:

I am advised that modelling of the cost of extending the care age is not publicly available.

While extending placement support for all care leavers would provide additional assistance, such an untargeted approach would direct the majority of resources to where there are low needs. If additional funds are to be provided to assist care leavers, there are more efficient and effective methods to utilise these funds..

Care leavers currently receive assistance and caseworker support until age 25.

An unpublished extract from the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study found 82 per cent of carers surveyed reported they were willing for the young person to live with them after they leave care. Of those carers, 90 per cent of foster carers and 84 per cent of relative / kinship carers were willing for the young person to remain as long as he / she wanted.

Out-of-home care

Transcript Page 60-61

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. Can you tell the Committee what is the largest number of children being cared for by a single out-of-home provider?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I would probably need to take that on notice, unless Ms Czech has that.

SIMONE CZECH: I do not have the actual figure, but I understand the biggest provider of statutory out-of-home care is actually the department.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay, but apart from the department.

SIMONE CZECH: Sorry?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That would be good to know and the figures you could provide.

SIMONE CZECH: We can provide the details. I understand the biggest non-government organisation is Life Without Barriers.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. If you could, and I am happy for this to be on notice, provide a list of the top, say, 10. Could you provide a list of all the out-of-home care?

SIMONE CZECH: Yes, we could, absolutely. I do not think there is any issue in providing that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: By the number of children in their care—it may fluctuate, obviously— including the department.

SIMONE CZECH: We can provide that at a point in time, I think, for you.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. That would be good"

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available

Indemnity policy – NGO out-of-home care

Transcript Page 61

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How much is the current indemnity policy going to cost for this current financial year and for each of the financial years it has been in place? How much is it costing?

ANNE CAMPBELL: It only started in December of last year, so December 2021. I probably need to take that on notice because, as yet, no-one has drawn down on that fund.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay.

ANNE CAMPBELL: But happy to take that on notice

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: So no-one has drawn down on it, but are you aware of liabilities accruing? Are service providers telling you they have got claims or they have settled claims or claims are ending up in court? Do you have any visibility of what level might be coming?

ANNE CAMPBELL: I could have a look at that and, again, respond on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. Thank you"

Answer

I am advised:

- The Short-term Indemnity Scheme commenced in December 2021 and will run until December 2022. The scheme is underwritten by the Treasury Managed Fund (TMF).
- DCJ will be required to make an additional agency contribution to the TMF commensurate with the assessed state liability from the scheme, which is passed on to service providers by way of an indemnity fee.
- The total cost of the scheme will be dependent on the number of providers who apply and the length of their indemnity period.
- Claims are made directly to icare who manage the TMF and who will manage claims made under the scheme.
- To date no claims have been made under the scheme, and no service provider has declared an existing claim during the application process.

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 62

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Right. Okay. I might have to come back to that. Returning to alternative care arrangements, on notice on the last occasion we got some figures about what happens to children who exit alternative care arrangements and nearly 49 per cent of them exited to a different arrangement including supported independent living, other funded placements et cetera. So that is nearly half of all the kids leaving alternative care arrangements. Do you have a breakdown as to where they actually go?

ANNE CAMPBELL: We would have to take that on notice. We do have a breakdown. Invariably—you mentioned many of the categories—the other excerpt is sometimes a restoration back to mum or dad or a placement with a family member aside from any foster care or residential care arrangements.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Just again, the figures that were given was 18 per cent went to foster care, 18 per cent to intensive therapeutic care, nearly 11 per cent to relative or kinship, nearly 4 per cent restored to parents, and then 49 per cent were to different arrangements—and there were a couple of examples given. Do you have a breakdown of that 49 per cent? That is a big cohort.

ANNE CAMPBELL: Sorry, I misunderstood the question, Mr Searle. Yes, we do. I do not have it with me but we can certainly provide it on notice. It invariably includes children in arrangements that we call special care arrangements, where children have quite significant disabilities. It is an arrangement that we consult with the Office of the Children's Guardian and the Children's Guardian on in order for me to take their advice about whether that is suitable for the child, and I am the delegated officer to approve that placement. There is also a range of other placements that we call individual placement arrangements, and they are with our funded providers but they are quite bespoke models to meet particular needs of children.

One really simple example is we from time to time have some quite large sibling groups and we do everything in our power to keep those sibling groups together, and we might work with one of our funded NGOs to have a bespoke arrangement around the care of those children. So that is where some of those children will go. But more than happy to provide a further breakdown for the Committee in response to that question."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

NGO out-of-home care

Transcript Page 63

"The ACTING CHAIR: For children that are in the care of the department, the responsibility lies with departmental case managers to do the leaving care plans?

SIMONE CZECH: That is right.

The ACTING CHAIR: For children whose out-of-home care is being oversighted by NGOs, the responsibility lies with the NGOs. Is that right?

SIMONE CZECH: Yes, that is correct.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any data, NGO by NGO, in terms of their completion rates?

SIMONE CZECH: I would have to take that on notice and provide that to the Committee."

Answer

I am advised:

Information on individual non-government organisations completion rates for leaving care plans is not publicly available. Publicly reporting at an individual agency level has the potential to identify individual children, due to certain non-government organisations providing case management to a very small number of children.

Provisional accreditation

Transcript Page 66

"The ACTING CHAIR: When was the last time that part of the department had provisional accreditation?

SIMONE CZECH: I would have to get the actual date for you, but it was more than five years ago now.

The ACTING CHAIR: Do any of the NGOs that currently provide out-of-home care have a provisional accreditation?

SIMONE CZECH: Again, I would have to take that on notice. I do know the accreditation status of any designated agency is listed on the Office of the Children's Guardian website, but we can easily get that for the Committee."

Answer

I am advised:

There are six non-government organisation agencies who have provisional accreditation and currently provide out-of-home care.

Alternative care arrangements / school attendances

Transcript Page 67

"The ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any suspension data and/or attendance data for the broader cohort of kids in out-of-home care?

SIMONE CZECH: I do not have that with me today but we can certainly provide that to the Committee on notice.

The ACTING CHAIR: That would be appreciated."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

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Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 67

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: The figure you provided on notice after the last budget estimates hearing was that 18.3 per cent went from ACA to intensive therapeutic care. Is that roughly the same figure today? That was up to 30 June I think.

SIMONE CZECH: I do not have those in front of me, but again we can provide them to the Committee.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If you could provide them on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

Of the 457 children exiting ACA in the 12 months to 31 December 2021, 17.3% exited to Intensive Therapeutic Care (79 children).

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 67

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Of those children who went into intensive therapeutic care, how long on average were they in alternative care arrangements before they were transferred?

SIMONE CZECH: I have not got that information with me.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am happy for you to provide it on notice.

SIMONE CZECH: We can provide it and we will. It will vary depending on the needs of children and where placements are available.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Sure. Could you also provide the median figure?

SIMONE CZECH: Of course."

Answer

I am advised:

Average length of stay in ACA for the 79 children exiting to intensive therapeutic care (ITC) in 12-month period ending 31 December 2021:

Mean: 90.9 days

Median: 78 days

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 68

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Over the past 12 months what is the longest period a young person stayed in alternative care arrangements before being transferred into intensive therapeutic care?

SIMONE CZECH: I would have to take that on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 68

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: According to the answers given to budget estimates hearings last time, alternative care arrangements are paid by invoices in arrears. Can you tell us what has been the total cost of alternative care arrangements for each of the 16 districts in New South Wales over the past 12 months?

SIMONE CZECH: We would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many individual nights of alternative care arrangements were charged to each district over that same period?

SIMONE CZECH: I would also need to take that on notice.

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 68

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If you on reflection find you have got anything more recent than that, that would be useful as well. That is the number of unique children in alternative care arrangements overall?

SIMONE CZECH: Yes, for that 12-month period, that is right.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Do you have that same information by district?

SIMONE CZECH: I do not have it with me, but we can certainly provide it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: No, on notice. Referring to the staff who supervise young people in alternative care arrangements, how many are departmental staff and how many are employed NGOs by number or by percentage?

SIMONE CZECH: Again, I have to provide the exact numbers on notice. The bulk of the staff are NGO staff that deliver the direct care to children. On the very rare occasion we do need to use DCJ caseworkers to look after those kids, it is invariably for a night or two while we organise an NGO to deliver that service. Like I said, it is rare but, again, we can provide the information on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 69

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I go back to the answers that were given on notice. I had an exchange with the Minister about the costs of alternative care arrangements, which I think is on page 23 of the transcript. We asked what the overall cost was. The answer provided states:

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.

That was the answer. But you must have a total cost over the past year, or since 30 June, and the number of nights covered by that cost to date? Can you provide those?

SIMONE CZECH: The cost of ACAs varies significantly from one child to the next, so there is no set costs. Sometimes children, depending on their need, will need a greater number of care staff looking after them. Where you have more care staff, that is obviously going to cost more because you have to pay for those salaries."

Answer

I am advised:

Please see response to question taken on notice titled Alternative care arrangement costs, transcript page 68.

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 69

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay, maybe we can break this down. I would like to know the total amount you have spent on ACA since 30 June last year, how many children have benefitted and how many nights has that purchased, if I can use that terminology.

SIMONE CZECH: I would like to take that on notice, if I could, and provide that to the Committee.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Of course. I am happy for you to take all of this on notice. If you could also provide that same information for the previous financial year, that would be good.

SIMONE CZECH: Yes, we will take that on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Bearing in mind your earlier evidence about the costs varying, could you give us, if you like, the highest and lowest cost for a child, so we can see what the spread is?

SIMONE CZECH: Certainly, we will take that on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Alternative Care Arrangements

Transcript Page 69

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is fine. Could you also provide any information you have about what drives those cost differentials. As you said, it is the number of care workers, but presumably it is also the number of other supports they might need.

SIMONE CZECH: Yes. That is an important point, Mr Searle. The majority of the costs are staff costs, but the other thing we are very focused on is therapeutic costs. Again depending on each individual child's needs, there will be a therapeutic plan wrapped around that child, and we will pay for that. That is an incredibly important component—to make sure that children are in receipt of that therapeutic support—and can drive some of the costs up quite significantly."

Answer

I am advised:

There is a large variance in alternative care arrangement (ACA) costs, driven by the emergency nature of these arrangements and the support needs of the child. While factors such as geographical location and therapeutic supports contribute to ACA costs, the most significant cost driver of an ACA is the direct care staffing required to effectively support the child in the ACA. This can include overnight awake shifts, 2:1 staffing ratio or multiple staff members needed to support sibling groups.

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 70

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay, thank you. At the last round of estimates hearings with the previous Minister, we asked for a breakdown of median length of stay. I think the information given by the department was: As at 30 June 2020 the median length of stay was 84.5 days and the longest was 833, and as at 30 June 2021 the median length of stay was 55 days and the longest stay was 303. I know we are not quite at the end of the year, but insofar as you have information for the year to date, can you provide those figures? That is, the median length of stay and the longest stay since 30 June 2021?

SIMONE CZECH: I can. I think I might have given this in evidence this morning, but I will just repeat it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In which case, I apologise.

SIMONE CZECH: No, that is okay; it is quick. There has been a decrease in the median length of stay between the end of September 2021 and 31 December 2021, and that has gone down from a median of 42 days to 32 days. The other breakdown we have is 75.9 children stay less than three months, 15.5 per cent of children stay three to six months, 8.3 per cent stay six to 12 months, and 0.2 per cent stay more than 12 months. In response to your question about longest stay, that is the young lass we were referring to earlier. She has been in an alternate care arrangement for 307 days."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Alternative care arrangements

Transcript Page 69

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Is she still in that care arrangement?

SIMONE CZECH: Yes, she is the young lady we were talking about earlier.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Was that as at 30 December?

SIMONE CZECH: Sorry, that is of now. That is an up-to-date figure for her, so it would have been less back on 31 December. Let me take that on notice, and I will make sure it was not a different child being the longest stay on that day.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes, of course. I am happy for you to take that on notice."

Answer

I am advised:

This information is not publically available.

Office of the Children's Guardian

Transcript Page 71

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That has technically brought us back to crossbench time, but there does not seem to be any crossbenchers. Ms Moriarty, did you have some further issues you wanted to raise? All right. I think I have got a couple to ask about the Office of the Children's Guardian. I know it might be unusual in budget estimates to actually resort to a budget paper, but there has to be one. I will just look at Budget Paper No. 4, page 7-41. If you look at the expenditure for the Office of the Children's Guardian—the amount that was budgeted for 2021 was about \$56 million, but only \$50 million was actually spent. That is largely a decrease in what were called ""other operating expenses"". That is nearly a \$5 million decline. Do you know what those expenses in decline were? No? We do not know what those figures are?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I have no idea.

SIMONE CZECH: No. I do not know either.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Mr Tidball, I know you are relatively new. Can you tell us what that is at some point on notice?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes, Mr Searle."

Answer

I am advised:

As part of the Office of the Children's Guardian's ongoing management of its budget, carry forwards are agreed with Treasury to ensure resourcing is matched with Working with Children Check application volumes. This is due to the variability associated with the revenue from the Working with Children Check (which was phased in over a five-year period) where application volumes are subject to fluctuations over this five year cycle.

In addition to this, during the two years in which there were lockdowns, the Children's Guardian provided extensions to Working with Children Check clearance holders. This meant that usual expenditure on Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and Service NSW costs for these periods were not incurred but were delayed to when those applicants sought to renew their Working with Children Check.

There is also underspend in relation to travel costs and other operating expenses that were not incurred due to COVID-19.

Office of the Children's Guardian

Transcript Page 71

"The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That would be good. The other operating expenses were meant to be nearly \$24 million. They were actually only about \$19 million. That is a big gap. But they are projected to be over \$23 million again this year. So it would be interesting to know what they are. Also, when you look at the employee-related expenses—they are meant to jump from nearly \$27 million to nearly \$30 million. Given the wage cap, I am assuming that means the Children's Guardian is actually going to employ more people. Is that a correct assumption by me? Or is there some other driver of those employee-related expenses?

SIMONE CZECH: We would have to take it on notice.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes. We need to take that on notice, Mr Searle.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That is okay. These are not trick questions. I am just trying to understand because we have had reports from the Office of the Children's Guardian. When there was some legislative changes in 2019 that resulted in—apart from Working With Children Checks and risk assessments, the Office of the Children's Guardian had a range of additional functions conferred on them, but the report from the coalface, as it were, was that there were not additional resources in terms of people to do that work and that has led to underfunding of those functions and work intensification and stress on those others who were there. So I was just wanting to understand whether that increase in employee-related expenses was an increase in resources for those functions or what the explanation may be. If you can take that on notice, that would be very good. I"

Answer

I am advised:

Noting the response to the above transcript page 71, employee related expenses increased due to a carry forward from last year (to this year), which was submitted due to recruitment delays as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2.5% wage increase.