

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2021

Additional hearings

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

Multiculturalism, Seniors

Hearing: Monday 14 March 2022

Answers due: 5pm Friday 8 April 2022

QUESTION

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Why the reduction in the employee related staffing expenses?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: This year there was no reduction. What has happened is—you are talking about 2021-22 or 2021?

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: No, 2021-22.

JOSEPH LA POSTA: So this year our staffing expenses will not have been reduced because they are in the vicinity of about 18 or 19. I can take the specifics of the question on notice, but we have certainly employed surge staff to help us through the pandemic and also make sure that our existing staff are cared for and supported as well because it has been an incredibly difficult time—24/7, around-the-clock sort of stuff, as you know.

ANSWER

I refer to the answer provided by Mr La Posta on page 39 of hearing transcript.

QUESTION

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: The reason I ask that question is that there is a fear expressed by some that, as a result of those cuts, there could be cuts in the number of employees. That is why I raised it with you and asked whether Multicultural NSW staffing will be replaced with contractors.

JOSEPH LA POSTA: Mr Moselmane, to the contrary, during my stewardship—and I have now had the privilege of doing this job for just over three years and numerous budget estimates committees.

Mr MARK COURE: Three years.

JOSEPH LA POSTA: During that time the workforce has only grown, Mr Moselmane, and that is my intention. I never came to Multicultural NSW to make cuts. I came, to be honest, to make sure that the relevance and the certainty of this agency during this time was never more important than it is right now. My aspirations are to grow the agency.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: How many staff do you have at the moment?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: I can take the specifics on notice, but I think this year it is in the vicinity of about 70—sorry, 70 full-timers and about 1,300 interpreters and translators that are casual.

ANSWER

As at 28 February 2022 Multicultural NSW had:

- 76.16 Full Time Equivalent employees, and
- 1,566 casuals as part of the Interpreters and Translators panel.

QUESTION

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Mr La Posta, have there been requests from STARTTS that have not been able to be funded? If so, what are they?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: Not that I am aware of, but I can take the specifics of that on notice. There is certainly nothing that I am aware of. Jorge and I keep a pretty open and honest dialogue. He sits as a part of our joint partnership working group that advises myself and Professor Peter Shergold, our coordinator-general of settlement, in terms of the issues and challenges. Like I said, they have played a critical role in the last couple of years during COVID and now the patriation of Afghan and Ukrainian citizens.

ANSWER

No, I am advised STARTTS approached Multicultural NSW in late 2021 to suggest the agency re-fund Witness to War to support the Afghan community, and Multicultural NSW organised this.

I am further advised Multicultural NSW approached STARTTS at the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine to ask STARTTS to set up a similar Witness to War service for the Ukrainian community and others affected by the situation in Ukraine. STARTTS advised it has the resources to accommodate this request and very quickly set up a service.

QUESTION

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes. Have you in those meetings been an advocate for Ukrainian refugees having those rights—access to Medicare, the right to work—so as they can contribute?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: Yes, Mr Shoebridge.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could you provide on notice—

JOSEPH LA POSTA: Because otherwise the costs sit with the State, and that is not in our interest.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We see that on many occasions.

JOSEPH LA POSTA: We do.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: With really unfair—

JOSEPH LA POSTA: Asylum seekers and others as well.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —restrictions on asylum seekers. Could you provide on notice what information you have sought from the Commonwealth and what, if any, answers you have?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: Okay.

ANSWER

Yes. I speak regularly with the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Alex Hawke and Multicultural NSW has advocated for this as the NSW representative on the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG), which is chaired by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and on which all States/Territories are members.

The Commonwealth has advised that they will make available three-year Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) for Ukrainian temporary visa holders in Australia, and to those who will arrive in the coming months. These visas will allow for access to work rights, healthcare and education for school-aged children. The Commonwealth has also advised that Ukrainian nationals on temporary visitor visas will be granted the same access to services.

QUESTION

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Speaking about Turbans 4 Australia, who are at the moment up in Lismore, having taken food, aid and assistance and provided their own trucks, their own transport and their own distribution facilities up there—

JOSEPH LA POSTA: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: They have also been providing that extraordinary service for the last two years to much-needed parts of the community in western Sydney and we have seen that organisation respond around the country in moments of disaster. Yet their primary grant application with Multicultural NSW was not successful. Can you explain why?

Mr MARK COURE: That is a question to me?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes.

Mr MARK COURE: Firstly, I have met with Turbans 4 Australia. I have been to many of their events. In terms of their grants, I will probably take that on notice, if I can.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes. Minister, I think they like politicians coming to their events and supporting their work, they welcome that. But what they really need is financial support because they are doing work that nobody else is doing. I think we all appreciate and celebrate the work they are doing, but when they ask for funding they keep getting knocked back. They get very small, tiny grants but their primary funding application is rejected.

Mr MARK COURE: Sorry to cut you off. Their last event that I attended at western Sydney, in fact Rydalmere I think it was, from memory, I know for a fact, from memory, from that brief that there were grants that they were successful with. But I will take that on notice. Turbans 4 Australia do an outstanding job in our community. In fact, the chair of that organisation was awarded Parramatta Citizen of the Year.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We will put his name on the record. It was Amar Singh and the extraordinary work he and his team do.

Mr MARK COURE: Exactly right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But what they are asking for is structural financial support from the Government. Did you say you will come back on notice about that or you will provide some additional information?

Mr MARK COURE: We will provide some further additional information in terms of the grants that they were successful with over the last few years, and any other relevant information.

ANSWER

I refer to the answer provided by Mr La Posta on page 39 of the hearing transcript.

QUESTION

MICHAEL TIDBALL: Just in relation to the website that has been established for the purpose of the floods and specifically in relation to your question, I believe, about telehealth and prescriptions, it is a first port of call for advice on a number of things, including telehealth and prescriptions. It also covers financial assistance; emotional and trauma support after a flood—and these are specifically targeted to seniors—flood and storm advice in community languages; emergency, legal and insurance support; emergency help for homeowners in a flood; landlords and tenants rights in a flood; and, in relation to telehealth and prescriptions, it deals with support to access ongoing healthcare and medicines. In terms of the specifics of that, I will be very happy to take that on notice and report back quickly.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Health the Hon. Brad Hazzard MP.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Perhaps you might be able to tell us about the consultative strategies that you are adopting around addressing the needs of older Australians arising out of the floods?

Mr MARK COURE: I will take that on notice, if I can

ANSWER

I refer to the answer provided by Ms Smyth on the hearing transcript.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I see. Minister, can you update us on a commitment made in 2019 about increasing the number of aged crime prevention officers? Where are we up to in the roll-out of that commitment?

Mr MARK COURE: I might take that question on notice at this stage and report back, if that is possible. Give me one second.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I am happy for you to come back later in the session, if that is a possibility, Minister.

Mr MARK COURE: I will report back, if I can, in the session.

ANSWER

I refer to the answer provided by Ms Smyth on the hearing transcript.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, I want to ask you about the New South Wales steering committee for the prevention of elder abuse. Has there been a meeting of that this year, or while you have been the responsible Minister?

Mr MARK COURE: Let me triple check on that, if I can.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Ms Smyth, you might be able to tell us. Did this committee meet in the 2020-21 period?

TANYA SMYTH: There is a steering committee with multiple working groups that I am involved in with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth. Yes, they have met multiple times in the last financial year.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you able to provide details on notice of the dates when it met?

TANYA SMYTH: No problem.

Mr MARK COURE: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can you also provide them for the 2019-20 period?

TANYA SMYTH: We can.

Mr MARK COURE: We can take that on notice as well.

ANSWER

I refer you to the NSW Elder Abuse Inquiry Final Report June 2020.

NSW are represented by DCJ on the Commonwealth led National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians 2019-2023 Implementation Executive Group.

QUESTION

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:

You touched on courts there, Minister. What funding is the Government providing the New South Wales courts and police for this purpose?

Mr MARK COURE: The Attorney General is up on Wednesday; you can ask him that question then.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I will, but in the meantime you have raised the fact of the translating services provided to courts and police. Perhaps you can either take that on notice or Mr La Posta can answer that question.

Mr MARK COURE: We will probably take that on notice.

ANSWER

The budgets for NSW Courts and NSW Police are detailed in their respective annual reports.

QUESTION

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Is there specific funding for those services to other government agencies that you have under Multicultural NSW?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: We do not fund other government agencies to do interpreting and translating; that is the first thing. They need to have a budget per se that is set out.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: That is their budget.

JOSEPH LA POSTA: The Government requires, under one of its mechanisms—I can get the specifics on notice—that a minimum of 6 per cent of all government necessary advertising and spending needs to be spent on communities as a minimum as well. Really pleasingly, under the stewardship of the Department of Customer Service and Minister Dominello and Minister Coure and others, in recent times, particularly during the pandemic, we have seen that shift up to 11 per cent or 12 per cent, which is pleasing because that is what the Minister was touching on before. That is what has helped us unlock all of the community radio stations and local print and all of the others to be able to make sure they get all the COVID-related material.

ANSWER

I refer you to the information available on the NSW Government website regarding the Advertising Policy.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Mr La Posta, can I clarify, are you saying it is not possible for the New South Wales Government to mandate that agencies use your translation service?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: I am happy to take the legalities of that question on notice, Mr D'Adam, but the advice that I have been given to date is, no, it is not possible to mandate them to use us. I would certainly be happy if that was the case, but the advice that we have been given to date—sorry, I can take the specifics of that on notice, but my understanding at this stage is no.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: What is the Minister's view?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, is that something you would be prepared to take forward as an option for a whole-of-government position, that excellent translation services offered by Multicultural NSW be mandated across government?

Mr MARK COURE: Firstly, it is an excellent translating service. They have done a wonderful job, particularly in the last two years during this pandemic. It is a question that I will take on notice, but I will do everything I can to help our multicultural communities right across New South Wales.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: Minister, continuing on that point, when competing with the cheapest outside providers are we lowering the potential quality or services that Multicultural NSW interpreters and translators can provide?

Mr MARK COURE: Again, I will take on notice that question about translating services.

ANSWER

The NSW Government's Multicultural Principles, as outlined in the *Multicultural NSW Act 2000*, require that all individuals have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of, and participate in, relevant activities and programs provided by or administered by the Government of NSW.

This ensures that anyone with limited English, or those that come from multilingual communities, are able to access important information on Government-run programs, key health messaging and services.

QUESTION

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr La Posta, would you in fact be the person responsible for due diligence? Would you in fact sort of say, "Well, I'd be reluctant to meet with that organisation," or, "Yes, you should meet with that organisation," that kind of stuff?

JOSEPH LA POSTA: In terms of structured meetings, that comes through the Minister's office. Then there are times when our counsel is sought specific to who the Minister is meeting with. With regard to the forums, that is a bit of a different one, Mr Secord, because what we have tried to do is make the online forums as available and accessible to the largest audience possible, just because it has been about critical health information relating to COVID or floods or things like that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will not ask you to reveal, but have there been groups that you have declined to meet since becoming a Minister?

Mr MARK COURE: I am going to have to take that question on notice. As Minister for Multiculturalism, you would appreciate and understand there are 315 ancestries out there. They speak 200-plus languages, worshipping and believing in 148 different religions. Certainly my job as Minister for Multiculturalism, and Minister for Seniors, for that matter, has and will always be about putting people first.

ANSWER

As Minister for Multiculturalism and Seniors I am working to meet with as many members of the community as possible.

QUESTION

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Chair, I seek leave to table three documents: a photograph with the President of China, which has been removed; the original posting referring to the Minister's trips; and the reference to the removal of those documents. Thank you. Now, I want to take you to your trips to China. How many trips have you taken to China since you became a member in 2011?

Mr MARK COURE: I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Well, I do not think you should take that on notice because in many interviews—

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Point of order—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Sorry, is there an objection?

The CHAIR: Are you taking a point of order?

The Hon. LOU AMATO: Yes. The Minister said he would take it on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay. I accept that the Minister will take that on notice but just to assist—

ANSWER

All my trips as an MP have been appropriately disclosed.

QUESTION

Mr MARK COURE: As I said before, we will take that question on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, have all your trips to China been fully declared?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, I believe so, but I will take that question on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You are taking that on notice but you understand that there is a discrepancy.

Mr MARK COURE: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: In your parliamentary declarations, it appears five visits, but in an interview translated into English it says that you have in fact had eight separate trips. Now, why are you taking it on notice? Is it because you do not remember? You have gone there so many times that you do not remember, or you want to provide an exact figure? What is the reason?

Mr MARK COURE: I want to provide an exact figure for you and for the Committee.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So you think there is a discrepancy between your declarations, five times. Were you, in fact, just embellishing then in the Chinese media interview?

Mr MARK COURE: I do not remember the interview but I will take it on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you familiar with an organisation called the Australia China Economics, Trade & Cultural Association?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, I am. The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is the association where you were, in fact, a keynote speaker. Is that correct?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, among other things. The Hon. WALT SECORD: And what were the other things?

Mr MARK COURE: Among other people, that is.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Oh, among other people. What year was that?

Mr MARK COURE: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You will take that on notice?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Where did that occur in China?

Mr MARK COURE: Again, I will take that on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You do not remember where it occurred?

Mr MARK COURE: It would have been somewhere in China, but I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

I attended the organisation's conference in Fujian, China, in June 2015, along with other members of Parliament.

I note that many MPs at both State and Federal levels have engaged with this organisation, including Labor leaders and MPs.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Okay. I might come back to the Aged Crime Prevention Officers commitment. Minister, were you able to get some further information in relation to that commitment and where it is up to?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, I certainly can. At the 2019 election the New South Wales Government announced it would deliver 1,500 new police officers over four years, including every command appointing an Aged Crime Prevention Officer. The Ageing and Disability Commission is provided funding by DCJ and works closely with Aged Crime Prevention Officers. I look forward to continuing to work with the commission to ensure that seniors live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. We will also work closely with the Minister for Police to continue the roll-out. In terms of particular numbers, in terms of what has been delivered, I will take that on notice, if I can.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I see. So you do not have specific information about how many are actually in place?

Mr MARK COURE: Let me just double-check on that. We might have that through our director of ageing.

TANYA SMYTH: Yep. As far as I understand I believe there are 12 currently in place.

ANSWER

I refer to the answer provided by Ms Smyth on the hearing transcript.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I might move to another item. Minister, are you aware of the Legal Pathways program that is provided by COTA?

Mr MARK COURE: I might take that on notice, unless the director of ageing has any information.

TANYA SMYTH: I am aware of that program that COTA NSW administers.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What is the status of its funding? First of all, is it funded through DCJ?

TANYA SMYTH: It is not, no.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is not funded by a direct grant.

TANYA SMYTH: Not currently, no.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it a State government-funded program?

TANYA SMYTH: It has been in the past, but I understand that COTA NSW has continued that program with other funding. I am not exactly sure. I would have to take it on notice. It is possible that they use some of their annual peak funding that is provided by the department for that service.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I see. So there is no ongoing funding from DCJ to continue that service, as far as you are aware?

TANYA SMYTH: Not specific for that program. That is correct.

ANSWER

I refer to the answer provided by Ms Smyth on the hearing transcript.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Does that concern you, Minister that the priority level is set at such an age as 80? It cuts out a lot of people. Is that something that you have made representations on or been an advocate to change in your role as Minister?

Mr MARK COURE: If it is okay with you, we will take that on notice and will refer that question directly to the Minister for Families and Communities and the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, who is the Minister responsible for this area.

ANSWER

This falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask you about that \$34 million then? How much of that is directed towards programs to deal with homelessness amongst senior New South Wales residents?

Mr MARK COURE: I might pass this on to the director of ageing, if I can.

TANYA SMYTH: I might take that on notice, thank you.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You are not aware of how much of that substantial program is in your belt, Ms Smyth?

Mr MARK COURE: We will reach out to the Minister for Families and Communities and the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, for a more detailed response, unless the director of ageing has further information.

TANYA SMYTH: I have got a little bit more information. There was \$183 million dedicated to fast track more than 1,400 new homes. Some of that is around the delivery of 2,800 homes, including 1,000 social homes to be built in western Sydney, Wagga Wagga and Coffs Harbour through the Community Plus programs, and 290 new social housing houses in partnership with community housing providers through the innovation fund. There was \$30 million for 80 new small-scale social housing programs. Older people—older women especially— have told us that those smaller scale housing projects are what they are interested in, in terms of avoiding homelessness. So some of those are being delivered through that broader program.

ANSWER

This falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC.

QUESTION

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: You can see, Minister, the significance of multicultural media not only print but also online, and online is growing as well. There is a great source of service providers out there in multicultural media, service providers to multicultural communities. Would you consider looking at providing a specific budget? Because, as you said rightly, Minister, these media outlets survive on the smell of an oily rag, as they say—the mums and dads or one or two or three staff that run a newspaper. It is important that there is funding from New South Wales to ensure their survival because through them, by ensuring their survival, you are ensuring that the information that you want to pass through to those communities is well received.

Mr MARK COURE: It is a great suggestion. I will take that on notice. But if I can just add to that, 74 multicultural media groups were awarded part of a \$2 million program for multicultural media outlets through a competitive multimedia grants program. In addition to that, since the Delta outbreak of COVID-19 in Sydney, a total of \$13.1 million of funding for communications and incentives were secured. This funding included emergency communications, multicultural media grants, translations, advertising for vulnerable communities. There certainly is money available, but I might ask Mr La Posta to add to that response.

ANSWER

The NSW Government provided a budget of \$13.6 million during 21/22 to support multicultural media as part of its COVID response.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Thank you. Minister, I come back to the aged crime prevention officers. I think in your earlier answer you said that 12 were now in place. I am advised that the promise was actually for 56. It is a long way shy of the number that was promised. Why is it so far off the election commitment?

Mr MARK COURE: As I said in my previous response, I look forward to continuing to work with the commissioner to ensure seniors live happy, healthy, fulfilling lives. I will also work very closely with the police Minister to continue this rollout. Ms Smyth, do you want to add to that response?

TANYA SMYTH: No.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You do not actually have an explanation as to why the number is so far off what you were—

Mr MARK COURE: The Minister for Police, I understand, has primary responsibility but working with DCJ. But I will work closely with the Minister for Police to continue the rollout. Regarding the particular numbers, I will take this on notice and I will report back.

ANSWER

Information on the rollout of Aged Crime Prevention Officers is available on the NSW Police website.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, given Ms Smyth's earlier answer about the input into the SEPP, I do not really understand the connection between how your support for that proposal translates into feedback into a process like the one that is being undertaken to consult on a SEPP that potentially is an opportunity to embody this silver level living housing design standard into law [disorder].

Mr MARK COURE: Sure. Whilst it probably is a question directed to our Minister for Planning, I will take that on notice and report back.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes the Hon. Anthony Roberts MP.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: In terms of the role of your unit, Ms Smyth, do you not track the budget spend for the strategy across the various activities? Obviously the lead agencies are responsible for implementation. I would expect that your unit has some responsibility in relation to tracking the spend for each of those programs that are part of the strategy. Is that not the case?

TANYA SMYTH: No, that is not the case. Many of those actions—for example, within focus area three, "staying safe, active and healthy", the NSW Ministry of Health is responsible for the majority of those actions and that is part of the broader New South Wales health system. Older people are a priority for NSW Health and many of the programs they deliver, but some of those programs are not specific to older people, so I do not think it is possible to pull apart that budget.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Does that mean that you do not have access to the spend for the previous strategy?

TANYA SMYTH: We do in terms of that allocation for the seniors strategy team and the implementation of actions related to that team.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I see. But not the actual programs that are incorporated in the strategy or the previous strategy?

TANYA SMYTH: I can take on notice to determine if the evaluation of the last strategy was able to quantify or estimate an amount of funding that was attributed to that strategy.

ANSWER

I refer you to the *Aging Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031*. For information on budget, I refer you to NSW Treasury. Progress reports for previous action plans are available on the NSW Government Communities and Justice website.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I see. You may have answered this, but I will ask again just in case. How many new projects have been delivered through the Aboriginal Housing Office capital works program that have specifically targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50?

TANYA SMYTH: We will take that on notice.

Mr MARK COURE: We will take that question on notice, if that is okay. We are more than happy to help.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes, the Hon. Anthony Roberts MP.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is fine. What about staying active and active aging programs? Can I ask about those? How have they reintroduced face-to-face components following the lifting of COVID restrictions?

TANYA SMYTH: Programs in general did pivot to online service provision but more recently many of those programs, including some of the programs funded under the Reducing Social Isolation for Seniors Grant Program, are now able to go back to delivering face-to-face services.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is just a proportion of them that are delivering face-to-face services. Is that correct?

TANYA SMYTH: I would need to take it on notice for exactly how many, but the majority have indicated to us that they are now moving back to delivering those services in person.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If you could take the details on notice and provide us perhaps a bit more of a detailed answer, that would be appreciated.

ANSWER

This information can be found on the NSW Government Communities and Justice website.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Minister, has the independent review of the Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act been tabled to the Parliament?

Mr MARK COURE: To my understanding, not yet.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: That is my understanding as well.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: When are you expecting to table it?

Mr MARK COURE: Very soon.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you able to provide the details on which stakeholders have been consulted in relation to the review?

Mr MARK COURE: It is all part of the review and we will report back to this Committee—unless, of course, the director or the secretary of the department wanted to add.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I am relatively new. Minister, I would need to take that on notice.

Mr MARK COURE: And the director?

TANYA SMYTH: In terms of the Act review last year, there were some regulation changes that were specifically requested by the commissioner. That was just around allowing the commission to exchange information with Commonwealth agencies, such as Centrelink, the Commonwealth department of housing, the Commonwealth Department of Health and as well as certain New South Wales government agencies. It also allows for registered nurses and speech pathologists to assist in the execution of search warrants under the Act. So some of those regulation changes that assisted the commissioner in implementing his provisions under the Act have already been amended.

Mr MARK COURE: Because of your interest in this, we will take the question on notice and provide you with a very detailed response.

ANSWER

The review of the Act has commenced. I have asked that it allow sufficient time to ensure that all members of the community have the opportunity to engage with the review.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That would be appreciated, thank you, Minister. Minister, can I ask about strategies for preventing elder abuse among culturally and linguistically diverse communities? Can you elaborate on the types of strategies that are being deployed in relation to those communities?

Mr MARK COURE: I will take that on notice, if I can. I did have material here. If it is okay with you, we will take that on notice and report back.

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Ageing and Disability Commissioner.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How many people utilise the project, Minister, do you know?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes. As I was mentioning before, I will turn to our director of ageing, who will add to that response.

TANYA SMYTH: The program is being implemented at the moment and I do not have actual numbers of how many people have participated, but we can get that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Okay. Has there been an evaluation of the efficacy of this program?

TANYA SMYTH: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If the evaluation has not been undertaken, can you provide also details of when the evaluation will be done?

TANYA SMYTH: Yes, we can.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Thank you. Is there any intention, Minister, in terms of rolling out this program beyond the pilot sites?

Mr MARK COURE: We will certainly look at that and provide you with a detailed response.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government the Hon. Victor Dominello MP.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Okay. Minister, I think in an earlier answer you touched on the Communities Plus program. I am advised that in 2019 the Minister for social housing, Brad Hazzard, said that over the next 10 years development projects on the Land and Housing Corporation sites throughout New South Wales would be delivered through this program. Are you able to advise how many homes have been completed to date as part of the Communities Plus program in New South Wales?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes. That is a question that should be directed to the relevant Minister. If it is okay with you, Chair, we will take that on notice and report back to the Committee.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Has the program ceased?

Mr MARK COURE: As I said, we will take that on notice and I will speak directly to the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services and report back to the Committee.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Perhaps on notice you might also inquire as to why that Communities Plus website now sends visitors to an unrelated other website on its home page. Minister, perhaps you might take that one on notice as well why that is the case.

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, sure.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: The link to Communities Plus on the Communities and Justice page takes you to something that is not related to that program.

Mr MARK COURE: As you would understand, that is an operational matter and the director of the department—sorry, the secretary of the department, my mistake—is next to me and he will no doubt follow that through with the relevant department.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Planning and Minister for Homes the Hon. Anthony Roberts MP.

QUESTION

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you able to provide, Minister, the numbers in terms of how many organisations applied for Reducing Social Isolation for Seniors grants?

Mr MARK COURE: I believe we have got that information here and I turn to our director of ageing, who will be able to help you in more detail.

TANYA SMYTH: In 2021-22, for round two of the Reducing Social Isolation for Seniors Grant Program, 185 applications were received.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you able to provide on notice the details of the organisations that applied for the grant—just the list of who the applicants were?

TANYA SMYTH: Yes, we can do that. No problem.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are you able to also provide details about whether—was this a budgeted program, Minister, or did the funds for this grant program come from some other source?

Mr MARK COURE: It was obviously before my time, but we can provide you with an answer.

TANYA SMYTH: It is an annual grant program for seniors, though, when the pandemic hit, the guidelines were changed to ensure that the programs that were being funded related to reducing and combating social isolation in older people.

Mr MARK COURE: Any remaining questions I have I think we will be able to put on notice later on.

ANSWER

The Reducing Social Isolation Grants Program is a fantastic NSW Government program to address social isolation for older people and to fund projects that address the challenges and barriers that contribute to social isolation. Applications are assessed following a process outlined in the published guidelines for each program developed by the department, using the eligibility and assessment criteria in the guidelines. This assessment process is aligned with the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Good Practice Guide to Grants Administration. A list of successful applicants can be found on the NSW Government Communities and Justice website.