

The Hon Kate WASHINGTON MP

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES, AND DISABILITY INCLUSION

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| 1 | 3-4 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: When was the last time that a young person went missing, and what was the outcome of that?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I can get the actual answer during the course of this morning, if that's okay. You'll appreciate, having been the former Minister, that the data and details of children fluctuates sometimes on a daily basis, so I'm happy to source that information and come back to you with that during this morning.</p> | I refer to the response provided in the hearing which can be found on page 49 of the transcript. |

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| 2 | 4 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Just to clarify, you said there are four young people missing. How many young people are away from placement? Do you have a breakdown of the two categories?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I don't have that handy but certainly can make efforts during this morning to get that number. Just to clarify, two numbers—away from placement and not in placement. Is that correct?</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's correct. Are there any young people currently missing from Sherwood House?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Not that I understand, as of this morning.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: When was the last time a young person went missing?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I would have to take that on notice as well and come back to you.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine.</p> | <p>I refer to the response provided in the hearing which can be found on page 49 of the transcript.</p> <p>I am further advised:</p> <p>As at 30 September 2023, there was 1 child or young person in OOHC recorded as “Self-placed”. There were an additional 280 children and young people who are under Parental Responsibility to the Minister who were not in a placement with authorised carer as at 30 September 2023. Of that number, 7 were “Absent over 24 hours – location unknown “ and 273 children were recorded as “Self-placed”.</p> |

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| 3 | 4-5 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I might move on to another area. Minister, how many children in your care have become pregnant in the past six months?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: As you would be well aware, there are a number of young people who are in care and who have experienced the worst things through their lifetimes. It does mean that they can sometimes, as I've already said, engage in unsafe and risky behaviour. The reports of young people who have become pregnant whilst in care come to me as Minister. I will come back to you later today with a figure on that</p> <p>but, again, it is something that we take incredibly seriously. Those reports that I read are sobering and very concerning. For any of those children, we ensure that they have the supports in place that they need to try to</p> <p>succeed, both in the steps that they want to take in their life and to keep their child safe as well.</p> | I refer to the response provided in the hearing which can be found on page 49 of the transcript. |

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| <p>4</p> | <p>12</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Just to follow on from that question, can you provide a breakdown of the number of young people in each of those types of care that you refer to? Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I can. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Because the original question was ACA. Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Yes. If you would like a specific number for ACAs themselves, I can— The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: No, all of them that you refer to. If you don't have it, I'm happy for you to come back. Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I can actually provide it to you right now, Ms Maclaren-Jones. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes, and what's the date? Ms KATE WASHINGTON: These are the latest figures, as at 31 August. Of the 471 children in the high-cost emergency arrangements, it includes 142 children in alternative care arrangements, 178 children and young people in individual placement arrangements, 86 children and young people in interim care model, and 65 children and young people in short-term emergency placements, and the final one is 29 children and young people in special out-of-home care. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you very much. Ms KATE WASHINGTON: As you would be well aware, these are an absolute last resort. They are a symptom of a system that is spiralling out of control.</p> | <p>I refer to the response provided in the hearing which can be found on page 12 of the transcript.</p> <p>High-Cost Emergency Arrangement data will be reported on a quarterly basis on departmental dashboards commencing in 2024.</p> |
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| | | | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you very much, Minister. Will you commit to providing that data on a quarterly or monthly basis publicly?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We are already reporting as—well, the answer is we are being as transparent as possible in relation to everything as part of the system, and I can't—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Minister, will you commit to providing those figures on a quarterly basis as you do with ROSH reports and everything else?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will just have to make sure with Ms Czech that that's actually possible and whether it's something that might already be happening.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Ms Czech, is that data possible on a quarterly basis?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I think if we could take that on notice and come back to the Committee with some further advice. The number fluctuates, as you will know, Ms Maclaren-Jones, quite a lot. But certainly we can take the question.</p> | |
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| 5 | 12-13 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Minister, how many young people have entered care in the last quarter? That's up to the June 2023 quarter.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I think I have those figures in front of me, Ms Maclaren-Jones, and if I don't, they will be something I come back to you with if it's going to take me a little bit to find them.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Minister, how many young people have entered care in the last quarter? That's up to the June 2023 quarter.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I think I have those figures in front of me, Ms Maclaren-Jones, and if I don't, they will be something I come back to you with if it's going to take me a little bit to find them.</p> | <p>I am advised: There were 570 children and young people who entered out-of-home care (OOHC) during the April to June quarter in 2023. A breakdown by age is available in the Child Protection and OOHC quarterly dashboard: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/DCJQuarterlyStatisticalReportonServicesforChildrenandYoungPeople/EarlyIntervention.</p> |
| 6 | 15 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: And it's exactly that that's driving our questioning on this—the no mention, no reference to disability in the State Government's Our Plan for NSW Public Education. Minister, how many disabled children attend a government school in New South Wales?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I do believe I have that information, but I don't think I'm going to be able to put my hand on it quickly. It's something I can come back to you with later on today.</p> | <p>I am advised: The Department of Communities and Justice does not hold this data. However, I refer to the response provided in the hearing which can be found on page 49 of the transcript.</p> |

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| 7 | 20 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: This is going to take some time in order to address, but what I have done is stood up a high-cost emergency arrangement unit within the department. It is now centralising those decisions that were once made across different districts so that we've got some starting to try to take back some control of a system that is largely run, especially when we're talking about alternative care arrangements, by private providers—and many of them are for profit—who, in my view, do not belong in the system and ought not to be in the system, but they've exploited the broken child protection system that we have inherited.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You're going to cancel those contracts, Minister. Is that what you're saying? Or review those contracts?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Ms Mihailuk, in reality—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Given they cost \$57 million just in a six-month period to look after kids in alternative care arrangements, just between January and June of this year—that's a lot of money. You and I both accept that. What will you do in relation to those contracts that are probably still in place?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Ms Mihailuk, if we were to cancel those contracts now, those children would have nowhere to go. So that is just not—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You could redirect the money to residential care. You could actually have a government that actually invests in residential care.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Ms Mihailuk, we are undertaking a number of different reforms, and we are looking at all options in terms of finding alternative, safer, relationship-based placements for children in</p> | <p>I am advised: Alternative Care Arrangements (ACA) are one type of High-Cost Emergency Arrangement. The Office of the Children's Guardian requires each designated agency, including DCJ, to have a service agreement in place with each ACA provider. DCJ can terminate its service agreements at any time. The NSW Government is committed to eliminating the use of all high-cost emergency arrangements, including ACAs, and building placement capacity to provide more suitable alternatives.</p> <p>ACA numbers: During the six month period from January to June 2023, there were 355 children placed in Alternative Care Arrangements.</p> <p>This figure includes all children who entered and exited an ACA during that six month period.</p> <p>As at 31 August 2023 (a single point in time), there were 471 children across all high-cost emergency arrangements, including 142 children in an ACA.</p> |
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| | | | <p>these settings. I do want to take you back to the numbers. The figures that you gave weren't quite accurate. I will come back to you with—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'm going by the answer you provided in the House.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I didn't—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You did. It's a question and answer on notice. You actually said "355 between January, ending at June '23". That's the number you gave. That's the number of alternative care arrangements. Perhaps your staff wrote it for you, but it's there. It's in writing. It's in Hansard.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Thanks, Ms Mihailuk. I will just check and make sure, because, as I said—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: That's okay. You can get across it later on, when you have time.</p> | |
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| 8 | 21 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Minister, you've answered my question. They have to have a bachelor degree. Is that the case for other States? Do all caseworkers across other States in Australia have to have a bachelor or a master's degree?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I believe so, but I will ask Ms Czech to answer that.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Thank you, Ms Mihailuk. The answer to your question is it varies. There's no consistent system across Australia. South Australia is an example. They only accept social work degrees, whereas Victoria accept degrees—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: What about Queensland?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Queensland is degree. We have done jurisdictional analysis previously. I'm happy to provide that to the Committee if that's helpful.</p> | I am advised: Information regarding required qualifications is contained in Attachment 1. |
| 9 | 21 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Very true. Final questions on that. Can you confirm the DLOs, whilst in your office, have not undertaken work that would contravene the Cabinet memorandum?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Yes, I can confirm that.</p> | This is not a question taken on notice. |

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| 10 | 21-22 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In the remaining time, I was wondering if you had the figures in relation to ACA numbers and if your commitment is to provide that information on the dashboard on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will come back to you on that. Sorry, I'm just going to correct my previous answer as well. I also did have another policy adviser, and he is no longer—he left as well for his own personal family reasons.</p> | Please see response to question 4. |
| 11 | 24 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: If I can just go quickly, in terms of the question around DLOs, there have been another couple of movements in terms of people taking leave and everything, so I want to take that one on notice and come back to you on that one in particular. In terms of pregnancies—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm happy to cover these off towards the end because you will have time with Government questions as well.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: This is a really quick answer, if you would like it.</p> | <p>I am advised: As at 9 November, there were 3.6 Departmental Liaison Officers supporting my office.</p> <p>All DLO movements in and out of my office have been directed by the Department.</p> |

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| 12 | 24 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'd prefer to just move into the session because we've got limited time. Minister, as of today, how many State-owned disability group home properties are there?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: There are roughly 800 properties, as I understand. I can ask for greater clarification in a moment, but I will just say—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: If you've got the exact number of how many homes there are as of today—</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: It's about 803.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many were there as of 1 March this year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'd need to take that on notice, but I'm pretty sure it's about the same.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>As at 27 October 2023, there were 805 Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) owned properties for use as disability accommodation.</p> |

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| <p>13</p> | <p>24</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN- JONES</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many properties are currently vacant? Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will go to Ms Campbell. But I understand that, of the properties that are vacant, 15 are already now being used for meanwhile use as transitional housing to support people who are at risk of homelessness, and women and children escaping domestic and family violence. In terms of the actual number of vacant properties still, I will defer to Ms Campbell. ANNE CAMPBELL: Just to correct it, it's actually 805 properties. And 739 are currently occupied as disability housing, 19 are currently occupied for meanwhile use—so that's transitional housing, out-of-home care and private rental—and 60 properties are currently vacant, of which 15 are actively being considered for meanwhile use. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Did you say 739 are occupied? ANNE CAMPBELL: Correct. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Approximately how many are living in the 739 properties? ANNE CAMPBELL: We'll probably need to take that on notice because it does change. There are a number of vacancies in some of those properties.</p> | <p>I am advised: As at 31 August 2023, there were 2,625 people with a disability residing within the occupied properties.</p> |
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| 14 | 24-25 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN- JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Currently, is it true that all of these properties and the managers are operating on a month-by-month lease?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I'll again defer to Ms Campbell on this but, certainly, what we are looking at in terms of the way forward with this property portfolio is to ensure that it is getting the utmost utilisation, given the current housing and homelessness crisis. We know that there are people desperate for housing across our communities. We want to ensure that we are providing anything that's available. We also know that there's a lot of—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I appreciate that, Minister, and I'm interested because these are homes to support people with disability. So you're saying every single property is now being utilised by a person with disability, or has it been transferred to social housing or to LAHC?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: You're right that they were homes that were held for housing people with disability, and the fact that there have been a number of vacant properties for some time, in the environment where people with disability have been desperate for housing, is something that I took very seriously when I learnt it, when I was sworn in as Minister. So we are undertaking a large piece of work to determine how we best utilise the housing that's in that portfolio to ensure that we are meeting the needs of communities across this State, because that housing, as you would well know, is scattered right across the State.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>Of the 805 assets in the disability assets portfolio, 523 have expired leases. All expired leases are continuing on a month-to-month 'holdover' basis while work is undertaken to determine the future utilisation of these properties.</p> |
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| | | | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Back to my question—are they operating on a month-by-month basis?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Ms Campbell?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I don't have the current detail, but I'm happy to provide it on notice. I do know there are a number of properties that are on a month-by-month lease, which we're currently looking at.</p> | |
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| 15 | 25 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'll be more specific, Minister. What is the average age of properties that, currently, people with disability are living in?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I couldn't say the average age. That's something that I could come back to you with. But there is certainly—after many years of the former Government failing to provide any upkeep of these properties, I do understand that a lot of them are falling into disrepair, and that's why some of them are standing empty. Because there was nothing—</p> | I refer to the response provided in the hearing which can be found on page 58 of the transcript. |
| 16 | 26 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How much has been allocated in the budget for maintenance of these properties?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I can come back to you later on that one, but I will say that the urgent focus of our Government was to ensure that the child protection system did not collapse, and we had to have a rescue package of \$200 million.</p> | I am advised: The allocated maintenance budget for the Department of Communities and Justice's disability property portfolio is \$27.3 million for the 2023/24 financial year. |

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| <p>17</p> | <p>26-27</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN- JONES</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'll now move on to Tomaree Lodge, which you referred to. There was a report given to you in May in relation to the site, which you have refused to release. When will you release that consultation paper?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I have made a clear commitment to my community and to everyone involved and who has an interest in that site that I will be completely transparent in this process. I will say that the Tomaree Lodge site is something that I have a very long history with. I have been a strong advocate for the residents, before they moved from the site, to ensure that they had the dignity and respect that they deserved.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I am talking about moving forward, not the work in the past.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: And I'm just saying that this is a site I have a very long history with, and I continue to consult with the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group. I met with them not long ago to discuss—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: When was that?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: It was a couple of months go. I would have to come back to you.</p> | <p>I am advised: I met with the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group on 30 August 2023.</p> |
| <p>18</p> | <p>27</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA</p> | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are you saying that Tomaree Lodge does not relate to your portfolio?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: No, I'm not saying that at all.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> |

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| | | MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So you should disclose every single meeting you've had with any community group or organisation in relation to that site.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Correct. Yes, absolutely. I'm not saying—absolutely.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: But you're not sure if you actually disclosed a meeting.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will make sure that is disclosed, if I haven't done that. That is an oversight, if it's not in my disclosures. It might be. I suspect that it's not in the latest disclosures, because the meeting I have had is more recent than the current disclosure period. I will have to check and make sure, because I'm well aware that any meeting I have that relates to anything in my portfolio must be disclosed, and I do my utmost to make sure I do. The consultation that you referred to and the paper that went to my community asking them for their ideas—what it didn't do was discuss the constraints on the site.</p> | <p>The meeting disclosure can be found here: https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-10/Minister-Washington-q3-2023-diary-disclosure.pdf</p> |

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| 19 | 30 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: In terms of the department itself—and I have mentioned earlier—morale is very low. Workers on the ground—I've visited 14 community service centres—are feeling very devalued. It's a really difficult environment to be working in at the best of times, but when you're having difficulty attracting and retaining staff, there is really a lot of pressure in the system at the moment and the spiral is definitely on, on many fronts, and we are working urgently on many fronts to try to turn things around.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What is the cost per day to keep a child in the high-cost emergency care?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: On a per day, I will ask maybe Ms Campbell to answer.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You can take it on notice. I can get that later.</p> | <p>I am advised: In the 2022/23 financial year the average annualised cost for an Alternative Care Arrangement was \$829,000 per annum.</p> |
| 20 | 32 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: How many Aboriginal caseworkers do you have right now, Minister, on the books?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I am unsure of that.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Ms Czech, can you answer that?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We'll come back to you on that one, Ms Mihailuk.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You can answer it now?</p> | <p>I am advised: As at end June 2023, there were of 2,364 total caseworkers. Of these, 247 (10.4 percent) caseworkers identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.</p> |

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| | | | <p>SIMONE CZECH: Yes. I've got a percentage. It's about 8 per cent, but we can certainly come back with that actual number.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Eight per cent of current caseworkers are Aboriginal?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Sorry. It's not 8 per cent. It's actually about 12. Can we come back with actual figures, if that's okay?</p> | |
| 21 | 33 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Okay. Can I also ask you a couple of questions on notice as well? Through you, Minister, to Ms Czech. Can I have the exact qualifications required—both NGOs and government caseworkers—not only for New South Wales but also in the other States? I want to be very clear what Queensland, South Australia—because, as I checked, South Australia said a degree wasn't required. Earlier you said a degree was required.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I did, and that's not my understanding, but we will clarify that. We do have that information available.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: During the break.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Yes, we've got it.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: If we can have the breakdown? I would also like a breakdown of the retention rates and the number of vacancies where a tertiary qualification is not required for caseworkers, for comparison. For example, in Queensland NGOs,</p> | <p>Please see response to question 8.</p> <p>An effective system for child welfare and family support is often discussed in terms of three 'tiers'; primary, secondary and tertiary. Across Australia, workers involved in tertiary level - being statutory welfare agencies and the operation of the statutory child protection system - are predominantly university qualified. Numbers of staff engaged in these roles have been increasing over the past decade Australia wide, however, longer term retention of tertiary child protection workers remains a challenge across Australia, as well as internationally. This is due to a range of factors, which may vary across jurisdictions.</p> <p>In March this year, the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) worked with Ernst and Young on a workshop to help identify solutions to improve the attraction and retention of staff and address current workforce challenges across the community services sector.</p> |

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| | | | <p>they don't have to have a tertiary qualification. Do they have a lower number in terms of their vacancies? If that information is available, yes.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: It is a really good question, and it is something that has been challenging to get out of the other States and Territories. New South Wales is the only jurisdiction that publicly publishes the caseworker numbers. We do have some information which we can provide the Committee. Just as a quick example, Victoria has a diploma entry and up. They have a much higher vacancy rate, last I spoke to them, which was only a couple of months ago, at about 15 per cent—so much higher than New South Wales. Their feedback to us, because we were asking them—</p> | <p>The NSW Association of Children's Welfare Agencies has also engaged a consortium of sector stakeholders, including DCJ and Aboriginal organisations, to develop a workforce skills strategy for the NSW child and family social services workforce. This work is expected to contribute to efforts to increase attraction and retention of the skilled workers we need in this critical area.</p> <p>DCJ does not hold data on the retention rates and vacancies where a tertiary qualification is not required.</p> |
| 22 | 33-34 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: What was the meeting that you were there for on the 25th?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: As I have done across the State in 13 other community service centres, I met with the department staff that work in the community service centre there. I believe they came from other towns to be there as well.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: That meeting was specifically on the 25th?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will have to check the date.</p> | <p>I am advised: The meeting with department staff occurred on 24 October 2023.</p> |
| 23 | 35 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you very much. Minister, I would like to quickly go back to the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group meeting. It has been put to me that you met with them on 30 August</p> | <p>I am not aware of any such meetings.</p> |

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| | | | <p>this year, and yet your disclosure for 1 July to 30 September does not include that meeting.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: If that's the case, I'll absolutely correct it.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Are there any other meetings that you failed to disclose?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Not that I'm aware of.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Will you double-check?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Absolutely.</p> | |
| 24 | 35 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Thank you very much. Following up in relation to data around ACAs and emergency placements, now that you've had a couple of hours to reflect on it, do you commit to providing that information on a quarterly basis?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I think Ms Czech, in her answer, had to check whether or not that was possible from the department's perspective. I'm not sure that Ms Czech has had an opportunity to do that yet.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I will put to you, Minister, that in response to questions on notice you have been able to give breakdowns of ACAs—also other information, to a particular month, even— so I assume it is available.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I'm happy to talk about HCEAs as much as you would like here.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: No, I am asking for a commitment.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I'm happy to be as</p> | Please see response to question 4. |

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| | | | <p>transparent—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Will you be transparent on the data?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I am happy to be transparent as we can on this because I want people to know.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: If the information is available and can be made available on a quarterly basis, do you commit to disclosing that information?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will commit to doing what we can. It is somewhat challenging, as you know, because the situation changes on a daily basis and I'm—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm not asking for a daily update.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I know, and I am committed—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm asking for a quarterly figure as of a particular date.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will take that on notice to give Ms Czech an opportunity to determine whether the department has got the capacity to do that with the data that is collected.</p> | |
| 25 | 36 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And how many young people have exited care up to this last quarter—the June 2023 quarter?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We will get that information to you.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It's also on the</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>There were 639 children and young people who exited out of home care in the April to June quarter 2023. A breakdown by age is available in the child protection and out of home care quarterly dashboard.</p> |

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| | | | <p>dashboard.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We will come back to you with that, Ms Maclaren-Jones.</p> | <p>https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/DJQuarterlyStatisticalReportonServicesforChildrenandYoungPeople/EarlyIntervention</p> |
| 26 | 37 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Minister, can you tell me how many young people, by district, have a guardianship, adoption or restoration plan? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: There is a lot in that. Certainly that's something that we would have to come back to you on. We'll take that on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>Please refer to Attachment 1 which outlines the number of children with a goal of restoration, guardianship or adoption by DCJ District as at 30 June 2023.</p> |

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| 27 | 38 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What proportion of children in care have case management plans?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: That again is something that I may have here. I'll just check quickly.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Also, how many of those have cultural plans?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: If I can't put my fingers on it quickly, it is something we'll come back to you with.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's okay. You can come back to me. I understand every child should have a care plan.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: It's something we'll come back to you with, Ms Maclaren-Jones.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many young people have a leaving care plan?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Again, I'll come back to you. Hang on. In terms of the children who have a leaving care plan, as of 30 June this year, 2,226.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You don't have the figures on the number of young people with case management plans?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Not at my fingertips. I'll come back to you on that.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>As at 30 June 2023, 86.6 per cent of children and young people who required a case plan had one in place. 76.9 per cent of young people preparing to exit care had a leaving care plan and 79.7 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people had a completed cultural support plan.</p> |

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| 28 | 38 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN- JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It might need to be taken on notice. How many young people in your care have a personalised learning and support program, which is the education pathway?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Again, we'll take that one on notice, Ms Maclaren-Jones.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>Data on Personalised Learning and Support Plans (PLaSPs) is recorded at an individual child level (i.e.: for each child). Data about numbers of PLaSPs in place at a given date is not available.</p> <p>The OOHC Education Pathway ensures that collaborative support planning is undertaken for all students in statutory care. A PLaSP is mandatory for all children in statutory care who are in school. A meeting to develop a PLaSP is generally undertaken within 30 days of a child entering OOHC, or within 30 days of a child who is in OOHC starting school for the first time. A PLaSP ensures each child's developmental and educational needs are met, monitored and reviewed annually.</p> |

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| 29 | 39 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, just back to the Family is Culture plans and implementation, the round table that you had, when was that held?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Can I just say it wasn't a round table. It would have been a really big table because there was about 100 people in the room.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: When was that meeting held?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: It was in August, I believe. I might ask for confirmation.</p> | <p>I am advised: The Aboriginal Child Safety and Wellbeing Reform Forum was held on 15-16 August 2023.</p> |
| 30 | 39-40 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Around about August. That's fine. Is there still a Family is Culture executive working group?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: As I understand, yes.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: When was the last time that met?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: For that I would have to defer to and ask Mr Thomas.</p> <p>BRENDAN THOMAS: I'll have to provide you the exact date on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised: The Family is Culture Executive Working Group meets bi-annually. The last meeting was held on 20 June 2023. The next meeting is planned for 15 December 2023.</p> |

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| 31 | 42 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: It is my system, and we are working as hard as we can to start turning this around. A system that has been spiralling out of control for years is going to take some time. The private providers that are doing some of the work in the alternative care arrangements, who I've said I don't think should have an ongoing role in the system, they—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: They do the majority of the work, don't they? Would you accept that? In terms of alternative care arrangements and emergency—</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: In terms of alternative care arrangements, I would have to check whether it's the majority.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: If you could take that on notice, what the percentage would be, it'd be good to know.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>Analysis undertaken in April 2023 showed that 41 out of 48 ACA providers (85 per cent) were for profit.</p> |
| 32 | 43-44 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Have you had a good look at any guardianship orders that have been issued where the full FACS investigation wasn't finalised? Are there any numbers in the department in relation to that?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I keep being thrown a bit by your use of "FACS". The Department of Communities and Justice—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Whatever. I call it FACS. It's the investigation process. The real issue, or the crux of the issue, that was raised by the 78</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>During the last four years of 2019/20 to 2022/23, the number of children and young people who exited out-of-home care to Guardianship Orders were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 419 in 2019/20, • 451 in 2020/21, • 375 in 2021/22, and • 299 in 2022/23. |

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| | | | <p>organisations at the time—and I don't know if they've come to visit you, or any individual organisations that might have. I'm trying to understand—maybe the department here can help you—has there been any data in relation to how many of these guardianship orders were issued without a full investigation being completed? Because that's what that Act enabled for the first time: a guardianship order, by consent, to take place where an investigation wasn't fully completed.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will say that, since I've been Minister, I'm not aware of that issue coming to me at all. But I'm happy to ask Ms Czech.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I'm happy to cover this off in the afternoon as well. A guardianship order can only be made by the Children's Court. There is a detailed assessment that goes as part of those court documents to the court, and it's up to the court to determine what's in the best interest of that particular child. I'm not sure about the terminology, but if you're meaning investigation in the sense of—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: The final case management documentation and whether they've finalised for that particular family. Often they're halfway through their investigations.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: My understanding, and we can certainly double-check this, is that we wouldn't be putting a matter to the court where there is an outstanding, what we coin, reportable conduct matter.</p> | |

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| | | | <p>Certainly, we can check that. I would think the Children's Court would be very concerned if we put up applications where that was the case.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: What about alternative dispute resolution processes? The community legal centres at the time raised concerns that families would consent to these orders and that they had perhaps not been given appropriate advice at the time or assistance in reaching that position.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I've recently met with Legal Aid, and I know that we're doing work with Legal Aid to ensure that there's advice available to families and children that are involved in court proceedings, including guardianship. That partnership is something where we will be able to assist those families to understand what the consequences are in terms of decisions that they're making about the appropriate form of permanency for them.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You said earlier, Minister, that there's 299 guardianship orders. Is that right?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I'll have to check again.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Roughly, I think that was the number that you gave earlier. Can I ask, or you can put this on notice—I want to get the number of guardianship orders in the last four years since the start of 2019, if that's possible.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Just to be clear—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: In relation to children in</p> | |

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| | | | <p>care, the number of guardianship orders— Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Since 2019? The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Yes, for each year. If you could provide that on notice, that would be good. Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We can take that on notice.</p> | |
| 33 | 44 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What is the latest data that you have in relation to the number of foster carer households? Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I understand that there are—sorry. Not enough, is the first answer. I'll have that figure— The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm happy for you to take it on notice. We've only got limited time. ANNE CAMPBELL: I've got that, Minister, if you want me to— Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Ms Campbell has that figure, I understand. ANNE CAMPBELL: There are 14,618 authorised foster carers. That's 9,617 households. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How regularly is this data reported? ANNE CAMPBELL: I'd need to take that on notice, but I think reasonably regularly. We have now got a dashboard to really monitor the number of foster carers in New South Wales. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is that dashboard publicly available?</p> | <p>I am advised: This is reported annually. There were 9,468 authorised foster carer household as at 30 June 2023.</p> |

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| | | | ANNE CAMPBELL: I'd need to take that on notice. I'll come back this afternoon. | |
| 34 | 46 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Thank you, Chair and Government members. Minister, you might take this on notice. I want to get the percentage of children re-reported at ROSH and the percentage of Aboriginal children re-reported at ROSH, if you have it available. If not, you can take it on notice.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: That's okay.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: No, apparently, we do have it now, if you would like it now.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Sure, that would be good.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: So, 2022 is 37.7 per cent. We can get the 2023 figure.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Yes, that's what I'm after.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I understand it's around 34 per cent. But we'll confirm that.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: So 30 per cent are Aboriginal, is that what you're saying?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: No, sorry. That's the overall re-report. Do you want it broken down by Aboriginality as well?</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Yes, if you can.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Sure.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>As at 30 June 2023, the rate of children and young people re-reported at risk of significant harm (ROSH) within 12 months of case closure was 32.8 percent. Of this, the ROSH re-report rate for Aboriginal children and young people was 45.7 percent. For non-Aboriginal children the ROSH re-report rate was 30.6 percent.</p> |
| 35 | 47 | | <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Can I just go back to clear up some of the things that came from the earlier session? Ms Mihailuk, you mentioned a couple of figures to me that I just wanted to go back to. I understand the confusion because HCEAs, as I mentioned, includes a</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>As at 31 August 2023, there were 471 children and young people placed in a high-cost emergency arrangement. This includes 142 children in alternative care arrangements, 178 children and young people in</p> |

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| | | | <p>number of different categories of placements. The figure you gave earlier of 355 children in ACAs as having increased to 471 since June—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: No, you gave me a figure in August of 471 and I'm going by the figure that you provided previously.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Yes, and I just wanted to clarify that the figure that you gave of the 355 isn't comparable because it relates only to children in alternative care arrangements and it relates to children in and out of alternative care arrangements in that six-month period. So, as they come in and out, that's the figure that you've referred to. It's not comparable to the 471. I know it gets confusing and it's a reflection of the way that it was previously all segmented into different sorts of—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: So the 471 is what? Is it a figure that just came out in August or is it also a six-month band?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We can go back with earlier figures. From the same time the previous year, I think we can provide that figure to you. But I'm just saying—</p> | <p>individual placement arrangements, 86 children and young people in interim care model, and 65 children and young people in short-term emergency placements.</p> |
| 36 | 49 | | <p>SIMONE CZECH: The last child that went missing was 11 days ago, a 14-year-old. We completed a media request and police were involved, and that child was located on 7 November. Those missing from Sherwood is zero. The last young person to go missing from</p> | <p>This is not a question taken on notice.</p> |

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| | | | <p>Sherwood, who escaped staff supervision from a medical facility, happened on the 24th of the sixth this year and was located two days later. And, in total, over the past 12 months, including that child, there was one other young person who went missing from Sherwood. And then, finally, the pregnancies as of October: 13 young women in out-of-home care are pregnant, with the youngest being 14.</p> <p>The CHAIR: Thank you very much.</p> | |
| 37 | 49 | | <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I'll just add one additional one as well. The number of children with disability in public schools under the Department of Education is 189,000.</p> <p>The CHAIR: Okay.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: So, 189,000?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Correct.</p> | This is not a question taken on notice. |
| 38 | 49 | | <p>SIMONE CZECH: And, apologies, one more. It was the question about the proportion of Aboriginal staff. In DCJ broadly, 8.1 per cent. We have a much higher rate of caseworkers at 10.9 per cent, being a subset of the broader DCJ. And we'll provide further information on the away from placement and not in placement separately.</p> <p>The</p> | This is not a question taken on notice. |
| 39 | 49 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I might just go back to disability housing. In particular, I'm interested to clarify a little bit more about the current situation with a provider that is operating on a lease-by-lease basis. What support is being provided to them, or</p> | <p>I am advised: Of the 805 assets in the disability assets portfolio, 523 have expired leases. All expired leases are continuing on a month-to-month 'holdover' basis. A further two leases are due to expire in the next 12 months.</p> |

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| | | | <p>what guarantee is there that they won't walk away and just say, "That's it"?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think at the moment the part of the department that's managing those leases is working with those providers, and so they're just looking at the existing expired leases and looking at what arrangements need to be put into place, ensuring that there is some sort of comfort for people with disability living in those group homes as well as the provider.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many leases have expired?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think there's about—I'd need to take that on notice to give you the accurate number.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And if you could give a breakdown of how many of the 800 properties, when all those leases, month by month, or—how many will expire over the next period of time?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. Happy to take that on notice.</p> | |
| 40 | 49 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What options are on the table when in discussions with these providers?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think at the moment the Government is looking at all the options in terms of the disability assets, so that's really all I can really comment on today.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Obviously, the Government has ruled out selling those properties to</p> | This is not a question taken on notice. |

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| | | | providers? ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes. That's what the Minister said this morning. | |
| 41 | 50 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What is the cost of maintenance, on average, of these properties? ANNE CAMPBELL: I think I'd need to take that on notice. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Could you also take on notice the most expensive cost of maintenance of one of the properties and then I'm happy with the least expensive as well. ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. | I am advised: The average cost of maintenance on the Department of Communities and Justice properties is \$27,041 per year. The most expensive maintenance cost was \$358,985 per year. The least expensive maintenance cost was \$15,000 per year. |
| 42 | 50 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to the properties, and around maintenance, how often do you engage with the providers about the maintenance? Do they come to you to say, "This is what needs to be repaired or changed"? ANNE CAMPBELL: I'd need to take that on notice. It's a different part of the agency. | I am advised: DCJ has regular contact with Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) providers about maintenance. The provider's maintenance obligations are set out in the terms of the lease agreement. Each SDA provider has a designated contact person in DCJ for any maintenance issues or requirements. |
| 43 | 50 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Yes, that's fine. Are you aware how many people under the age of 65 are living in aged-care facilities or aged-care homes? ANNE CAMPBELL: I don't have that with me, so I'll take that on notice. | I am advised: The Department of Communities and Justice does not hold this information. |
| 44 | 50-51 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The next one is in relation to the support of families into early childhood education project—if you can provide a breakdown of the current enrolments in that. It was a | I am advised: The Supporting Families into Early Childhood Education program was a pilot program funded by NSW Department of Education and commissioned by NSW |

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| | | | <p>pilot site, I understand.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think I'd need to take that on notice, and if you could give the name of the service, too, that'd be good.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It was the support of families into early childhood education project. It was a pilot.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: If you could also advise if there's funding to extend that program beyond this year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Also if there is a review and evaluation of that project as well.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. I'll take that on notice as well.</p> | <p>Department of Communities and Justice. The pilot was conducted in the following pilot locations: Fairfield/Liverpool/Bankstown; Walgett/Coonamble; Kempsey; and Cessnock.</p> <p>As at 17 October 2023, total enrolments across the pilot sites were as follows: 259 children enrolled in 600 hours of early childhood education, with an additional 123 children engaged with the program who had not yet been enrolled in early childhood education.</p> <p>NSW Department of Education has decided to end funding the pilot as planned, when contracts expire on 23 December 2023. Service providers have been sent confirmation of the program end date.</p> <p>Questions regarding a program review or evaluation should be directed to Education.</p> |
| 45 | 52 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: I just pick up a comment that the Minister made—I think was in response to Ms Higginson's issue about the state of the department and your initial observations. The Minister made reference to morale and that she found morale to be low. I appreciate it is sort of a post-COVID culture. Would you have any reflections on that?</p> | <p>I am advised: Publicly available information is available on the Public Service Commission website.</p> <p>The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) People Matter Employee Survey (PMES) results show a response rate of 80 per cent, with a 9 per cent increase</p> |

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| | | | <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: My reflections on that would be to go to the science at a particular point in time, and we're currently in the midst of analysing the PMES data, which has just come together. We do quite a deep drill of that data. We had a very healthy participation rate this year. I could give a series of anecdotal observations, which I don't think are going to be instructive. I think a considered response to that latest PMES data, which looks at a number of factors, a number of cohorts, which we can look at right across the various areas of DCJ and we can slice and dice in a number of ways—I think that is going to be the most instructive thing for the Committee. We would be happy to take that on notice and give you some analysis which is objectively based and also current.</p> | <p>from 2023. The engagement score remains consistent over the past 5-years, moving between 63-65.</p> <p>DCJ Divisional engagement scores ranged between 58 to 81.</p> <p>The level of engagement within DCJ is reflected in the publicly available results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65 per cent are satisfied with their ability to access and use flexible working arrangements +5% NSW Public Sector. • 57 per cent feel they are paid fairly + 11% NSW Public Sector. • 86 per cent support my organisation’s values +2% NSW Public Sector • 93 per cent understand what ethical behaviour means within my workplace - same as NSW Public Sector. • 55 per cent feel the amount of stress in my job is manageable +1% NSW Public Sector. • 35 per cent felt burned out, compared to 39% in the NSW Public Sector. • 58 per cent said that their sense of wellbeing is favourable - same as NSW Public Sector. <p>Results have been communicated internally to all DCJ employees. Four key focus areas will be concentrated on across DCJ including eliminating racism, developing our</p> |

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| | | | | <p>employees, communicating future focused activities and improving staff wellbeing.</p> <p>By February 2024, action plans on the PMES results will be developed targeted to the results in each of the business divisions. Communication activities are planned in 2024 to bring together actions occurring across DCJ.</p> |
| 46 | 55-56 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'd like to start with—not a good topic—the sexual abuse in care and what the department is doing currently and what systems to address those problems with children who are in foster or other types of out-of-home care, who report or the families are reporting that they are being sexually abused, but those children are still in that home situation. How many incidents of that have been reported in the last 12 months?</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: Ms Higginson, it is entirely appropriate that I, at the outset, indicate that those matters, as you'll expect me to say, must be referred to the police. It goes without saying that, fundamentally, in terms of the duties we have generally but the statutory mandates that we have, clearly any abuse is completely unacceptable. I then acknowledge that the systemic response to that and the training of our staff in terms of the range of issues involved are crucial. In terms of the data that we would have, I'm not sure that we have anything with us today—</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If you're happy to take it on notice—</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>In 2022/23, there were 654 children who were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in out-of-home care (OOHC), of which 109 had sexual abuse as the primary abuse type.</p> <p>It is not possible to report on the relationship between each of the children and the alleged sexual abuser(s), how soon prior to the report the abuse occurred (whether contemporaneous or historical), or whether the abuse occurred in the context of an OOHC placement.</p> <p>It is also not possible to advise whether the sexual abuse directly resulted in a change in the child's placement or an action to restore the child. While detail about allegations is captured on an individual level, data on these factors is not captured at a system level and is unable to be extracted in this way.</p> <p>NSW has a range of processes in place to identify, address and protect children from sexual abuse in all contexts, including OOHC. These include authorisations</p> |

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| | | | <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: Happy, Ms Higginson, to take it on notice and, without in any way wishing to thwart the accountability and the scrutiny, which is such a crucial part to the estimates process. Also, subject to the Minister's concurrence, if there are cases or situations where there are concerns that matters have not been dealt with appropriately, always open to having a briefing on those.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I appreciate that. The numbers really that I'm looking for are how many incidents in that situation that you have records of and then how many of these children have been then moved into a different placement and/or restored with their parent and then how many reports of sexual abuse of children who have been removed—that whole category.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: We can provide that on notice. If I could add to the secretary's response, we absolutely take any allegation about a child in care seriously.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I know this.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: There's a raft of policies and procedures that we need to follow, including reporting to the Office of the Children's Guardian and NSW Ombudsman, who, as you know, are an independent regulator and oversight of the department. We do have some numbers, but they haven't been broken down, so we might take it on notice and provide the breakdown if that's okay.</p> | <p>for carers; working with children check requirements for people who work and volunteer with children, as well as carers and adult members of carers' households; mandatory reporting obligations; obligations on bodies classified as child safe organisations; and the reportable conduct scheme.</p> <p>NSW is also working with the Commonwealth and all other states and territories to harmonise working with children check and reportable conduct schemes, as well as to adopt a national information sharing scheme modelled on Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This scheme would allow for the timely and fulsome sharing of child protection information between relevant agencies and across jurisdiction to help promote child safety and ensure persons who may pose risks to children cannot avoid detention by moving between those jurisdictions.</p> |
| 47 | 56 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The family safety assessment tool sits within the standard decision-making | I am advised: |

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| | | | <p>framework and screens out referrals to early intervention services when DV is the only risk factor. Why is DV considered low risk in that matrix or that tool? Is there any review of that? Is that going to change? Is there a reason why it sits in the place it does?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: It's a great question. I think you might be referring to the Structured Decision Making suite of tools. Is that correct?</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Just so I make sure I respond appropriately. The short answer is, all of the components of the Structured Decision Making suite are under review, including those that are used at the helpline. We are proposing, although not approved yet, to make some changes to some of the questions that are contained in the tool that we use at the helpline.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that something that is ongoing or is there a kind of finish time to when that review has completed?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Because there's so many components to the Structured Decision Making suite of tools, there are different periods of time. We can provide further information to the Committee about those time frames, if that's helpful.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That would be helpful. The inquiry really is about what work we're doing with the DV part, because obviously we've got so much</p> | <p>Structured Decision Making (SDM) is a suite of tools used in NSW to support decision making. In NSW it currently includes the SDM Mandatory Reporter Guide, SDM Screening and Response priority tool, SDM Safety Assessment, SDM Risk assessment and Risk Re-assessment. The SDM tools have been under review as part of the Quality Service Review since 2021. This work is known as the Better Decisions for Children Project.. The identification, assessment and response to children's experience of Domestic and Family Violence is a feature in each of these tools. The SDM tools do not include a matrix for determining domestic violence as 'low risk'. In each of the SDM tools, children's experiences of and the risks associated with domestic violence is considered alongside a threshold of safety and risk of significant harm.</p> <p>The updated tools will reflect contemporary knowledge and evidence about Domestic Violence, including the new provisions of legislation Coercive Control (Feb 2024), updated Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool and the Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study.</p> <p>Because of the number of assessment tools under review, and phased implementation of updated SDM tools, the timeframe for completion of the Better Decisions for Children project was due for completion in 2024. In October 2023, the Minister made a commitment to review</p> |

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| | | | <p>more knowledge that's coming online all the time. SIMONE CZECH: Absolutely.</p> | <p>the use of SDM tools, in particular SDM Risk Assessment and Risk Reassessment, and to consider co-designing a new Risk assessment with Aboriginal community. This has impacted on the timeframes for the Better Decisions for Children project.</p> |
| 48 | 56-57 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: This is a money question, so perhaps to you, Mr Tidball. What's the total government spend for the provision of the out-of-home care system for the last period? I don't think we captured that this morning. MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes. I have that on me. We can have a sprint to see who gets to the number first. Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The race is on. We'll start the clock. ANNE CAMPBELL: I think the total budget is \$3.1 billion, and that's broken down into targeted early intervention, \$187 million; the FCS—I think that's the family referral services—\$21 million; child protection, \$889 million; and out-of-home care, \$1.96 billion, which includes the high-cost emergency arrangements. Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That's for last financial year? ANNE CAMPBELL: No, this financial year. Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What was last year? ANNE CAMPBELL: A bit less than that. I can give it to you, unless someone's got last year's— Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you got last year's figure? Is that a figure that is reflected in the papers, if I was to look for that? MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The Out-of-Home Care budget for the 2023/24 financial year is \$1.96 billion and includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Out-of-Home Care Non-Government Organisation (NGO) Contracts, 2. NGO Complex Needs (including High-Cost Emergency Arrangements), 3. Placement and Support costs and Foster Care Allowances (including High-Cost Emergency Arrangements) for children in Department of Communities and Justice care. <p>For previous financial years the budget was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2022/23 - \$1.80 billion 2. 2021/22 - \$1.68 billion |

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| | | | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm actually looking for the last three years. I can look, but I struggled, is the truth. On the spend, that was a breakdown. I think I got it all. What is the total spend on specialist services for children in out-of-home care, for trauma specialists? Do you have those breakdowns?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I do have those breakdowns, and I'll try and find them in here.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm looking for trauma specialists, disability supports and learning educational supports or therapies, those breakdowns. We're just trying to get a gauge on the last two years and this year and get that comparative and where we're tracking in terms of those spends. Is it easier to take it on notice?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think so. It's not just within the child protection budget; it's also some of the funding within the disability budget as well, so happy to take that on notice.</p> | |
| 49 | 58 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can I get a breakdown of the number of properties that were vacant that now are not? I think you said around 60.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Sixty-six.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can I get the breakdown of how many of those are supporting people with disability? You mentioned the hospital discharge. I'm interested to know if you've got any data on the existing number of people who are still waiting in hospitals and are discharge ready.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, happy to take that on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised: Of the 66 vacant properties as at 27 October 2023, 19 were occupied for meanwhile use (transitional housing for people experiencing homelessness, out-of-home care, private rental).</p> <p>The Department of Communities and Justice does not hold hospital discharge data.</p> |

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| | | | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Also on that, how many of those are still waiting for NDIS plans to be approved?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay, I'll take that on notice. I think you asked a question earlier this morning around the average age of the disability properties, so that's 26 years. That would range from 10 to 40 years, and there are 2,625 people with a disability in those group homes.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I raise this because it's recently come to my attention—and I will pass this on to the Minister—that a resident was concerned about what's going to happen to her sister, who has been in the Hunter for quite some time, because the provider has indicated they're on a month by month. Is what's happening being communicated to residents, just to give reassurance that their home is safe and secure?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'm happy to follow up on that and check.</p> | Options are currently being considered to determine the future use of current disability assets. This will be communicated with providers in due course. |
| 50 | 58 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to the Tomaree Lodge site, the Minister said an additional assessment is being undertaken. Was that a request by the Minister or her office?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think it was the Minister tasked DCJ to undertake further work to determine the physical, ecological and heritage constraints of the site.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What's the</p> | I am advised: This work is ongoing. |

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| | | | <p>reporting date for that assessment?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'd need to take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is there a cost involved in that assessment?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Again, I'd need to take that on notice. It's a different part of the agency.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Okay, and then whether or not they've entered into a contract or whether it's internal assessment.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, okay.</p> | |

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| 51 | 59 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is there a time frame when a decision is made that a young person will move to the pathway of restoration versus adoption or guardianship? What is that time frame?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Yes, it's enshrined in the legislation. For a child that's under two years of age, there's a six-month period to make that decision. For a child over six months of age, from memory—and I can double-check this—it's 12 months. So there's that in the legislation but, of course, we are beholden to the Children's Court to make a decision about whether restoration, in the first instance, is a realistic possibility or not, and for the court to make a final order whether that is the case or not. Then we are required, at least annually, to conduct a review of each child's circumstances in statutory out-of-home care. At that point, there should be consideration given to the permanency goal for that particular child and whether that is progressing, what the barriers are and how we might make sure that happens as soon as it's safe to either get them home or move to guardianship or adoption.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>After an interim order is made by the Children's Court, a decision about whether it is a realistic possibility for the child to be returned home to their parents, should be made within specific timeframes as outlined in Section 83 (5) of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within six months for children under two years of age or; • within 12 months for children who are older than two. <p>The Department of Communities and Justice's role is to help the Children's Court to make its decision within the above timeframes by submitting an assessment around the realistic possibility of children returning home within a reasonable period that is within a maximum of 24 months, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If there are exceptional circumstances and it is in the best interests of the child or young person, the Children's Court can make an order for longer than 24 months.</p> |
| 52 | 59 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I want to move to ACCOs and the support. How many ACCOs have been accredited to provide out-of-home care?</p> <p>BRENDAN THOMAS: There are 17, as I understand it, at the moment.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And how</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>There are currently 20 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) accredited by the Office of the Children's Guardian to deliver out of home care services. There have been no additional new ACCOs accredited in the past 12 months.</p> |

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| | | | many in the last 12 months? BRENDAN THOMAS: I'll have to take that on notice. | |
| 53 | 61 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Back to the Aboriginal Guardianship Support Model, which is a pilot up in the Hunter and also out at south-west Sydney, that was a two-year pilot. Has that concluded? BRENDAN THOMAS: I don't believe it has concluded. There is an independent evaluation of that program, which, as I understand it, is ongoing. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you know when the evaluation will be available? BRENDAN THOMAS: I don't have the date here, but we can provide that to you on notice. | I am advised: The pilot remains active. The evaluation final report is expected by 30 June 2024. |
| 54 | 61 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm interested to know what data is kept in relation to young people in out-of-home care and their school attendance and if there is any work that's being done with the Department of Education regarding that? ANNE CAMPBELL: I think I'd need to take that one on notice. I think there is some information, but I'm not exactly sure how current it is. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Could you also check how many young people in out-of-home care are not enrolled in school right now? ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm also interested to know how many have been suspended from school in the last 12 months—2022-23. ANNE CAMPBELL: I'm happy to take that on notice. | I am advised: The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) does not keep data on general school attendance. There is a data sharing agreement in place between DCJ and the Department of Education (DoE) to regularly monitor and review the educational outcomes for students in out-of-home care (OOHC). This assists better informed case planning and personalised support planning to target the individual needs of the children and young people in care. From July 2023, DCJ has received monthly school attendance rates for all school aged children who are enrolled in a NSW public school and who are the under the parental responsibility of the Minister. By February 2024, DCJ will have received the attendance rates for |

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| | | | | these children and young people for the entire 2023 school calendar year. The analysis of this data will provide valuable insights to caseworkers and teachers about attendance of children and young people in OOH across NSW. |
| 55 | 61 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If a young person in out-of-home care was subject to the police Suspect Target Management Plan, would DCJ be told about that?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I think that the short answer I could provide is, I hope so, but I might need to get some advice and come back to you with a response on that.</p> | <p>While this matter most appropriately falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, I am advised:</p> <p>From 25 September 2023, the NSW Police Force ceased the use of Subject Target Management Plan (STMP III) cases relating to young people.</p> |
| 56 | 62-63 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The Better Decisions for Children project web page states that the DCJ: ... will review and improve the decision-making tools, practices and processes in NSW in the child protection and out of home care system across six key areas. That's that structured decision-making tool. I know we touched on it a bit earlier, but there are some questions around that. Why has DCJ partnered with the same organisation, Evident Change, who developed the initial SDM tool? Have you sought a truly independent organisation or worked with the ACCOs, including AbSec and ALS?</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: Can I, Ms Higginson, firstly say, the Minister, this morning, spoke about the recent forum and that, having been there for those two days, it was a very confronting experience. As with all of those things, for all of us, to immerse ourselves in what we heard was very powerful. I think all of us, and with a</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>While the question was answered in the hearing, Structured Decision Making (SDM) is a suite of tools used in NSW to support decision making. In NSW it currently includes the SDM Mandatory Reporter Guide, SDM Screening and Response priority tool, SDM Safety Assessment, SDM Risk assessment and Risk Re-assessment.</p> <p>SDM is a licenced suite of tools that are owned by a US based not-for-profit organisation, Evident Change (EC) (formerly known as the Children's Research Centre).</p> <p>As part of implementation, EC recommended a review period of every two years and no more than every five years to ensure the tools best match the needs of the jurisdiction they are implemented in NSW the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)</p> |

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| | | | <p>very active interest in this by the Minister, are, as a department, at the moment, doing quite a bit of work on the tool. The partnership group, is yet to meet, and bear in mind that this is a matter ultimately for determination by the Minister and the Government. If I can just reflect the spirit of listening to what we have heard, recognising that there has long been a concern that the tool is discriminatory and that there is work being done, the principle and the spirit, at this point, is the key thing and I make the point it is very actively being considered. There is no commercial partner in considering that and it is a matter that will be discussed by the partnership group. I should, having made those introductory comments, if I may, just ask my colleagues if they wish to supplement what I have said.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: If I can answer the part about the stakeholder or consultation. We have a group of approximately 40 stakeholders, most of whom are external stakeholders. It includes Aboriginal people who have got a lived experience of the child protection and out-of-home care system. AbSec were part of that group, although, I think, they may have exited from that group, but I can double-check that. But there is a significant group of people that are going through every one of the seven structured decision-making tools and actually making recommendations and adjusting where we can. To Michael's point, we are, in particular, looking at the risk-assessment tool, because</p> | <p>commenced the quality service review (QSR) of the SDM tools in 2021. EC, as owners and licensees of the tools are the only organisation who can undertake this quality service review.</p> <p>In commencing the QSR, DCJ contracted AbSec to partner with DCJ to undertake the QSR process. This included the funding of a full-time project officer AbSec position to facilitate community consultation and stakeholder engagement and feedback. Based on community feedback after three consultation sessions, AbSec withdrew their support of the project and did not support further community consultation with AbSec members.</p> <p>The DCJ project team continued to engage and consult with other Aboriginal community stakeholders including Stolen Generations Organisations and Survivors, Grandmothers Against Removals (NSW) and a number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Service Providers, in addition to internal cultural consultation advisory groups for example the State Aboriginal Reference Group and Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes unit. It also includes Aboriginal young people with experience of being in care and Aboriginal parents who have had their children removed. Over 40 Aboriginal stakeholders are represented across multiple working groups, governance and stakeholder groups.</p> |

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| | | | <p>that is the one that the Aboriginal community and sector and the department are most concerned about, and looking at options about what we do with that tool and what are some of the options around replacing that tool.</p> | <p>In October 2023, the Minister made a commitment to reviewing the use of SDM tools, in particular SDM Risk Assessment and Risk Reassessment, and to consider co-designing a new Risk assessment with Aboriginal community. This has impacted on the timeframes for the Better Decisions for Children project. New timeframes for completion will be projected once the Minister Advisory Partnership Group advises on the preferred co-design approach.</p> |

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| 57 | 65 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just on that, I hear all the time whenever I'm doing work with the police and trying to look for less contact, particularly young people, they repeatedly say to us that there needs to more when a young person's in trouble and police are denying bail to young people because there isn't the right thing right there to help that young person. Is there work that DCJ is doing, particularly around—the kid might be saying, "I can't go home" or "I can't go there", and the police are always saying "We're lacking this here, this mechanism, this part of the wraparound." What are we doing on that front to stop kids being denied bail? Sorry, I'm not suggesting for the reasons they have to be denied bail. I get that that's a police problem.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Of course, and this is probably delving into Minister Dib's committee as well.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: But we do know, as everyone in the room will know, that there is significant crossover between children who come into contact with police and Youth Justice, and the child protection system. I think from memory about 50 per cent of children known to Youth Justice, or young people known to Youth Justice, also have had contact with the child protection system. I can get the actual figure. I think it's about 20 per cent, I think—no, it's less than that. There's a proportion, a percentage, of kids that are in out-of-home care that have also experienced Youth Justice detention. There's a range of services Youth Justice provides that are bail services—the bail accommodation line. We've got services like Youth on Track, which is our flagship diversionary program. We</p> | <p>While this matter most appropriately falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Youth Justice, I am advised: Bail support is provided by Youth Justice caseworkers to support young people who do not receive bail supervision. Youth Justice caseworkers at local Youth Justice community offices around the state may provide young people without mandated bail supervision, and their support people, with information about relevant services that could assist them in addressing identified needs. This support could include assistance with understanding bail conditions and coordinating linkages with further support services. Direct bail support is not mandatory and cannot be compliance-based.</p> <p>Youth Justice's team in the Bail and Accommodation Support Service (BASS) provides an after-hours intake service for NSW Police. This service was previously known as the Bail Assistance Line. BASS provides police with information that helps young people gain access to bail if they are likely to be held in custody. Young people can be connected with accommodation, transport, case support and other services to help them satisfy the conditions of a bail order.</p> <p>Further information about these initiatives is publicly available on the Youth Justice NSW website - https://www.nsw.gov.au/legal-and-justice/youth-justice.</p> <p>Support for shared clients in Child Protection, Out of Home Care (OOHC) and Youth Justice includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice and Community Services working more cohesively in meeting section 28 of the Bail Act 2013. This requires that young people |
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| | | | <p>have A Place to Go, which is an accommodation unit for contact in case accommodation is needed, and there are some bail initiatives around the State as well. We can provide more information on notice, if that's helpful.</p> | <p>under 18 can be held on remand until suitable alternate accommodation is located.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice staff discuss mutual clients with child protection staff, as mandatory reporters, and to assist with case management, risk assessment, compiling background reports, and assisting young people with accessing supports and services such as housing. • Child Protection and OOHC caseworkers support mutual clients at Youth Justice Conferences by attending the conference and providing support with the development and completion of the young person's Outcome Plan. • Youth Justice also collaborates with the Community Services Engagement and Support Program to ensure young people in Youth Justice and Out-of-Home Care are supported with access to the NDIS. <p>NSW has a Joint Protocol in place to reduce contact of young people in residential care with the criminal justice system. This was developed by the NSW Ombudsman in consultation with stakeholders including the NSW Police Force (NSWPF), Legal Aid NSW, Impact Youth Services, St Saviours, Uniting Care Burnside and Marist Youth Care. The Protocol was established in 2016, and updated in 2019, and is signed by DCJ Child and Family directorate; NSWPF; Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA); and AbSec.</p> |
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| 58 | 65 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I have just a couple of questions following on from discussions about high cost emergency placements from this morning. I just want to clarify, are professional care models, such as PIC, included in that category?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: No.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: No. However, the PIC model does have an appeal and we are looking at models of more agility and a more contemporary way of doing foster care. I think the issue with the PIC model and models like that is around scalability, and that's the work that needs to be done.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You said that there is work being done. Is an evaluation being looked at in relation to that type of care?</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: I think PIC, to my knowledge, has been—</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think it has been evaluated.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: There has been an evaluation.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I can take that on notice to see if there's anything else about it.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The Department of Communities and Justice conducted a review of the Professional Individualised Care (PIC) pilot project in the Western Sydney Nepean Blue Mountains District between March 2018 and January 2020. The review examined the preliminary outcomes of the pilot, identified implementation barriers, facilitating factors and potential adaptations to support effective implementation.</p> |
| 59 | 65-66 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to the targeted early intervention evaluation, on the website there's a fact sheet that says on 1 September the TI evaluation interim report would be due and in May next year the final report would be due. I'm just</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The Targeted Earlier Intervention Evaluation Interim report has not yet been finalised. The report is expected to be finalised and published on the Department of Communities and Justice website by March 2024. As the</p> |

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| | | | <p>wondering if the interim evaluation has been done.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice and maybe come back after the break, presuming we come back after the break.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That was brilliant!</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Could you also advise whether or not that report, which was due in September, was provided to the Minister or her office?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, I'll take that on notice.</p> | <p>report is not finalised, the Minister has not yet received the report.</p> |
| 60 | 66-67 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How much has been allocated to the disabilities policy team?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'd need to take that on notice, but the disability policy team has 22 FTE. They are responsible for the NDIS work that we're doing with the States and Territories and the Commonwealth—the Australian disability strategy and the advocacy that I mentioned earlier.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How much is allocated to the Restrictive Practices Authorisation this financial year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Again, I'd need to take that on notice, but I do know that there are nine FTE staff that manage that function in DCJ.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme, what is the current budget for that?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I need to take that one on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I understand</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The budget for the Disability Policy team employee related and other operating expenses for 2023/24 is \$3.9 million.</p> <p>The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme is administered by Transport for NSW.</p> |

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| | | | <p>there is a \$2 million cut in that for this financial year. If you could take that on notice—where that funding has gone to, if it has been cut?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, and I think that would be from education.</p> <p>ZOE DENDLE: Yes, we will need to take that one on notice, and we'll get back to you.</p> | |
| 61 | 67 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to More Jobs, More Care, which was a two-year program that I believe runs out, or has run out, this year—</p> <p>ZOE DENDLE: That's correct.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: —do you have a breakdown of how many people participated in that program?</p> <p>ZOE DENDLE: We'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can you advise how many people commenced and also how many people identified as Aboriginal that completed the program?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.</p> <p>ZOE DENDLE: Yes.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you know how many of the people that completed the program went on to get full-time employment?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think we'll take that one on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised: The NSW Government initially funded the More Jobs More Care program (MJMC) as part of an economic recovery priority for NSW in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020/21 NSW Budget allocated one-off funding of \$17 million over two years, for Care Sector Jobs and Skills also known as the MJMC program.</p> <p>Phase One of the MJMC program to boost the care workforce became operational in October 2021 and concluded in September 2022. More than 3,000 people commenced training of which, more than 1,500 people completed the training. Noting that close to 800 people withdrew from the training after gaining employment in the sector.</p> <p>MJMC Phase One had an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander focus with 10 per cent (250) of the 2,500 places being targeted for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. As at June 2022, this target was exceeded with close to 300 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people commencing the program. This resulted in close to 100</p> |

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| | | | | <p>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants completing the program, achieving 66 employment outcomes which included 15 traineeships.</p> <p>As at November 2022, the MJMC Phase One program provided more than 1,700 employment outcomes, including over 300 traineeships.</p> |
| 62 | 67 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is any investment or work being done to grow the carer workforce?</p> <p>ZOE DENDLE: Not specifically from this year's budget.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I understand some of the work that is done at a Commonwealth level is particularly in relation to the thin markets. I think there was a pilot that was done here in New South Wales. Do you have any information on that?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I think we can take that one on notice and come back to you.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The National Disability Insurance Agency undertook a pilot project of three different types of market intervention to address the challenges for National Disability Insurance Scheme participants who live in remote and very remote area. Pilot sites operated in Walgett, Wentworth, Bourke, Brewarrina in NSW.</p> <p>The evaluation from the thin market pilot is available at: https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/research-and-evaluation/market-stewardship-and-employment/evaluation-ndia-thin-market-trials.</p> |
| 63 | 67 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is the multicultural consultative group still in operation—the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association?</p> <p>ZOE DENDLE: I would have to take that on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW receives funding through the NSW Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP) to deliver both individual advocacy and systemic advocacy. The DAFP commenced on 1 January 2022.</p> |

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| 64 | 68 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Could I receive a breakdown for each program, if possible, of Brighter Futures, Youth Hope, Intensive Family Preservation, Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect, and Functional Family Therapy?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'm happy to take that on notice. I've got it in here somewhere.</p> | <p>I am advised: The committed expenses for 2023/24 financial year for the programs are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighter Futures, Youth Hope and Intensive Family Preservation. The total committed expenditure for all three programs combined is \$108.6million. The Department of Communities and Justice is unable to provide the disaggregated amount for the individual programs as multiple contracts with providers manage these programs. • Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect - \$7.2million. • Functional Family Therapy - \$18.1million. <p>Figures are excluding GST and indexation for the 2023/24 financial year period.</p> |
| 65 | 68 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: How much is being allocated for pregnancy family conferencing?</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: We'll need to take it on notice, Ms Merton.</p> | <p>I am advised: \$21.5 million over four years, from 2022/23 has been committed to expand Pregnancy Family Conferencing state-wide.</p> |
| 66 | 68 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Further, how much has been allocated for Closing the Gap initiatives for child protection and out-of-home care?</p> <p>BRENDAN THOMAS: We can provide you that on notice as well.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: And how much has been allocated for Strong Families, Our Way?</p> <p>BRENDAN THOMAS: That is a subcomponent part of</p> | <p>I am advised: Funding for Closing the Gap initiatives for child protection and out of home care include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$9.9 million over four years to the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) for the Aboriginal Child and Family Advocacy Support pilot aimed at keeping First Nations families safely together and prevent them from appearing before the Children's Court |

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| | | | the Closing the Gap budget, so we'll provide you that with the Closing the Gap budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$8.7 million over four years to AbSec for Strong Families Our Way, which supports a sustainable, community-led approach to self-determination in the First Nations child and family system • \$3.9 million over four years to AbSec to bolster First Nations-led commissioning to give communities decision-making power over the design, delivery and monitoring of programs and services |
| 67 | 68 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: How many clients has Family Connect and Support supported for the years 2021-22 and 2022-23?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I know I've got it in here. I might take that one on notice, but I do have that data.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>There were 20,465 clients supported by Family Connect Support (FCS) in the 2022/23 financial year. The number of clients recorded in the 2021/22 financial year is not able to be recorded as FCS providers were transitioning to a new reporting system.</p> |
| 68 | 68 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm interested in the diversion of people with cognitive disability from local courts. I'm mindful this may cross over to the AG—I understand if that's the case, because we have him tomorrow anyway—but I'm interested to know how it's tracking in expanding that program.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: Can I do some homework tonight, Ms Maclaren-Jones?</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>This question should be directed to the Attorney General.</p> |
| 69 | 69 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: If I could pick up the family preservation program, I'm questioning what the total number of contracted places is that family preservation programs have provided this financial year?</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The total number of contracted places is available within DCJ Annual Reports.</p> <p>In the 2022/23 financial year, it is estimated that 10,059</p> |

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| | | | <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'm just checking. I think I'll take that on notice, but I might be able to give it before the end of this session.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Also, how many services were delivered to children this financial year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that one on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Then further to that one, how many of those children that received that service this financial year were Aboriginal?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Regarding the Permanency Support Program-Family Preservation, how many families have been assisted this financial year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Do you mean last financial year or to date, this financial year?</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: To date.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: And last financial year, if possible.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Then further to that, how many families were Aboriginal receiving assistance this financial year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: I think the answer to that is 300.</p> | <p>children and young people received family preservations services, and 3,695 Aboriginal children and young people received family preservations services.</p> <p>In the 2021/22 financial year, it is estimated that 16,465 children and young people received family preservations services, and 6,429 Aboriginal children and young people received family preservations services.</p> <p>Permanency Support Program Family Preservation data is not able to be provided in this format. Family preservation data is in the process of being moved to a new data collection system and Minimum Data Set.</p> |

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| 70 | 69 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Thank you. Then relating to the Brighter Futures Program, how many families received support this financial year under Brighter Futures?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: How many children and young people received support under Brighter Futures?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised: This data has not been available for some years, and I am working with the Department to increase transparency and the availability of data.</p> |
| 71 | 69 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Then regarding the Youth Hope program, how many children and young people received support this financial year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'm happy to take that on notice and for last year as well.</p> | <p>I am advised: This data has not been available for some years, and I am working with the Department to increase transparency and the availability of data.</p> |
| 72 | 69 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Then just moving to MST-CAN, or Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect, and Functional Family Therapy-Child Welfare, how many families received support this financial year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take both of those on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised: This data has not been available for some years, and I am working with the Department to increase transparency and the availability of data.</p> |
| 73 | 69-70 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Then regarding the Nabu program, could I receive information on how many families received support for the following years— 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, I am happy to take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Further, is there a commitment to expand the Nabu program outside the Illawarra and Shoalhaven area?</p> | <p>I am advised: The following numbers of families were supported by the Nabu program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) 2019/20 – 30 families (b) 2021/21 – 54 families (c) 2021/22 – 62 families |

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| | | | ANNE CAMPBELL: Currently, we've got funding that's constrained, so not at this stage. | |
| 74 | 70 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Regarding Resilient Families, how many families have been referred to the program this financial year?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Is there a commitment to expand Resilient Families to areas outside of south-western Sydney, Sydney and the south-eastern Sydney districts?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Not at this stage.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>This data has not been available for some years, and I am working with the Department to increase transparency and the availability of data.</p> |
| 75 | 70 | The Hon. RACHEL MERTON | <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Then further, what are the funding figures relating to Intensive Family Preservation, as to how many families received support in 2022-23?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: Could I also receive information on how many families received support around the intensive-based family support?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'm happy to take that on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>This data has not been available for some years, and I am working with the Department to increase transparency and the availability of data.</p> |
| 76 | 70 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I might jump in in relation to Thriving Families NSW and how many that has assisted in 2021-22 and 2022-23 and whether or not you could provide a breakdown of the number of parents and children supported.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, I'll take that one on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>The following numbers of children were supported by the Thriving Families program</p> <p>(a) In the 2021/22 -financial year 37 parents and 34 children were supported in the program.</p> <p>In 2022/23 financial year there were 52 parents and 47 children supported in the program.</p> |

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| 77 | 70 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In relation to the Safe and Supported national framework, action item number 3 is regarding workforce. One of the time frames is for jurisdictions to report on their current and projected workforce needs across their jurisdiction. Do you have any information on that and how that's tracking and the analysis that has been done?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I might take that on notice so I can give you a more fulsome response.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Also provide information on the barriers and also the opportunities to inform the strategies around sustaining the workforce—the two items under action item number 3A.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Okay. I'm happy to take that on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised: An interjurisdictional working group is progressing work on activity 3a under the First Action Plan for Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (Safe and Supported). The working group consists of representatives from Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies (including the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)); the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group; and the National Coalition on Child Safety and Wellbeing. In accordance with activity 3a, work is progressing on a child protection and family support workforce development report which will include analysis of current and projected workforce needs across states and territories, and identification of barriers and opportunities to inform development of strategies for a sustainable workforce.</p> <p>In NSW, an activity-based Caseworker Workforce Strategy was implemented for 46 activities designed to support the stabilisation of the supply of caseworkers, reduce vacancy rate, and improve the retention and wellbeing of the workforce. The Caseworker Workforce Strategy was developed to improve attraction and retention of new caseworkers DCJ. It was envisaged that the strategy would impact in three key ways, to:</p> |

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| | | | | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Broaden entry pathways in specific locations for targeted groups and increase support for new caseworkers to enhance the entry experience2. Deliver practice-based learning and development programs to build practice excellence state-wide3. Build leadership capability to better support caseworkers and enhance organisational culture. |

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| 78 | 71 | Ms SUE HIGGINSON | <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes. Under that, I've got a bunch of questions that come through. One of the points that it said was that, although over 95 per cent of children who entered the out-of-home care received the PSP packages, very few went on to receive the restoration support. How many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children were restored to their parents from final orders, from interim orders, in the last two years? Have you got those numbers?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: We would have it, so I'll take that on notice.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What I was going to say is I've actually got a few questions that come directly from that, and they're really good questions, and they've been provided to me. So I might put those through to you, and we can get those, and they really are just about trying to track what we've done.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Happy to.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>There were 417 children who exited out-of-home care to restoration in the 2022-23 financial year.</p> <p>There were 422 children who exited out-of-home care to restoration in the 2021/22 financial year.</p> <p>Attachment 2 provides a breakdown of these children by Aboriginality and by the legal order type at the time of exit from out-of-home care.</p> |

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| 79 | 71-72 | The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK | <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I just wanted to put a couple of questions. I want to ask about the Office of the Senior Practitioner, specifically, if I can ask—I understand they conduct research. So I'd like to know how many staff are within the realm of the Office of the Senior Practitioner in the first instance.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: We can answer that.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You can probably answer for me that pretty quickly.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: I actually think we might need to take that on notice, because the figure I've got here I don't think is correct.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: You might need to take this on notice, too. I'd like to know how many qualified caseworkers are currently employed within the Office of the Senior Practitioner?</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Can I just clarify the question. Caseworkers that—</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: They were caseworkers that have now been seconded into the Office of the Senior Practitioner.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: We can get that.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I'd also like to know generally across all the different departments how many caseworkers have been seconded.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: We have that available. I don't have it with me today.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: That's fine. You can take that on notice. That's great. Can you also provide me specifically how many conferences, both interstate and overseas conferences, that senior executive or, indeed, any of the management have undertaken in the course of the last, say, two years, specifically the</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>Staff numbers and functions:</p> <p>There are 358 full time equivalent staff (as of 15/11/23) employed at the Office of the Senior Practitioner (OSP). There are nine directorates within the OSP, all of which support the delivery of frontline child protection and out-of-home care (OOHC) services.</p> <p>Team</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Aboriginal Culture in Practice</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Assessment Practice</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Serious Case Review</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inclusive Practice</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Practice Learning</td> <td>33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>OSP Business Support</td> <td>11</td> </tr> </table> <p>(Senior Practitioner, administration unit, human resources, finance and project support)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Practice Quality</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Practice and Permanency</td> <td>146</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Psychologist Services</td> <td>97</td> </tr> </table> <p>The Practice Research team (consisting of two positions) makes up less than 1 percent of staff. This team conducts practice research about decision making in the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) workforce</p> | Aboriginal Culture in Practice | 7 | Assessment Practice | 15 | Serious Case Review | 12 | Inclusive Practice | 18 | Practice Learning | 33 | OSP Business Support | 11 | Practice Quality | 19 | Practice and Permanency | 146 | Psychologist Services | 97 |
| Aboriginal Culture in Practice | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assessment Practice | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Serious Case Review | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inclusive Practice | 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Practice Learning | 33 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| OSP Business Support | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Practice Quality | 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Practice and Permanency | 146 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Psychologist Services | 97 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| | | | <p>Office of the Senior Practitioner.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Certainly. We can provide that on notice.</p> <p>The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: And I'd like the costings of each of those conferences. Thank you.</p> <p>SIMONE CZECH: Yes.</p> | <p>and the Caseworker Development Program amongst other projects.</p> <p>The Practice and Permanency team, the largest team within the OSP (41% of the OSP), directly supports caseworkers at every office in NSW.</p> <p>The Psychologist and Specialist Services team (27% of the OSP) provides direct psychological assessment, intervention, consultation and training services to children, young people, carers and professionals across the sector.</p> <p>The Inclusive Practice team (5% of the OSP) supports best practice with children and families from multicultural backgrounds, living with disability or identifying as LGTBQIA+.</p> <p>Seconded Caseworkers: There are currently 29 qualified substantive caseworkers (making up 8% of OSP staff) seconded to the OSP, predominantly due to temporary vacancies as OSP staff backfill district roles.</p> <p>Presenting at conferences:</p> <p>Since the 1 January 2022 until 22 November 2023, senior executive and management from the OSP have not attended or presented at any international conferences.</p> <p>At the request of conference organisations, the Senior Practitioner was a keynote speaker at the following interstate conferences to share her expertise and the experiences of NSW child protection to support other Australian jurisdictions and non-government organisations:</p> |
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| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 May 2023: Stop Domestic Violence Conference (VIC) – costs were covered by the conference organisers.• 24 May 2023: Threats to Sports Integrity (QLD) – costs were covered by the conference organisers. <p>Attendance at conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5-7 September 2023: One senior leader attended the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Conference – paid for by the Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes Directorate within DCJ. |
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| 80 | 73 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I've got a couple of questions. One is in relation to the Kids Early Years Network. How is that initiative going? Is it continuing to be funded?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Yes, it is continuing to be funded, and I'm pretty sure they're looking at an evaluation of it at the moment.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I assume you'll need to take it on notice, but do you know when that evaluation is due?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I'll take that on notice.</p> | <p>I am advised: An early-stage implementation evaluation of KEYS has been delivered. A full KEYS evaluation is expected in 2025.</p> |
| 81 | 74 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It was the second point. We've covered off the compatibility of services and the leaving care plans. But the second point that the commissioner raised was involvement in meaningful activities—skills development across all service types. I'm just interested to know the department's work in that space.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I probably need to take that one on notice and come back to you.</p> | <p>I am advised: The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) continues to put in place initiatives, including training and resources, so that all children in care have plans that support their safety, permanency, and well-being. This includes planning for practical, independent living and skill development.</p> <p>DCJ caseworkers use the Independent Living Skills checklist to assess a young person's strengths and needs to help inform the support and preparation they may need.</p> <p>Some skills based examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart and Skilled program - subsidised vocational education and training |

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|-----------------|-------------------|--------|--|--|
| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Scholarships for care leavers (Charles Sturt University and Western Sydney University) • Safer Driving Course • Funded leadership/mentoring programs such as Ladder |
| 82 | 74 | | <p>SIMONE CZECH: If I could add, the children in out-of-home care that live in residential settings— like any child in out-of-home care, they all have a case plan. That case plan should detail those activities, along with schooling, health et cetera. Just in terms of the commissioner's comments about leaving care, which I absolutely wholeheartedly agree with, we've got some further work to do to improve our leaving care work with young people. But there has been a significant improvement over the last three years. We've seen leaving care plans get to a compliance rate of 76.9 per cent, which is a 10.3 per cent increase from three years ago—nowhere near where it needs to be; it needs to be 100 per cent. But we are continuing to make efforts and educate staff, in particular, about the importance of but also what needs to go into those plans.</p> | <p>This is not a question taken on notice.</p> |

| Question Number | Transcript Page # | Member | Question on Notice | Answer |
|-----------------|-------------------|---|--|---|
| 83 | 74 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN- JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Have all New South Wales government agencies developed their child safe action plans?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: We'd probably need to get advice from the guardian.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: I would need to take that on notice, I'm sorry. It is, as Ms Campbell has indicated, a matter where we'd need to confer with the guardian.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine, and then if you can also clarify which ones are outstanding and what work is being done to ensure that they do put their plans in.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: Of course.</p> | <p>I am advised:</p> <p>All seven prescribed agencies have submitted and had their inaugural child safe action plans approved by the Children's Guardian. Prescribed agencies are required to publish their approved plans, after which they are linked to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) website. At present, six of the seven prescribed agencies are publicly available via the OCG's website and the seventh is expected to be available in December 2023.</p> |

| Question Number | Transcript Page # | Member | Question on Notice | Answer |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 84 | 74 | The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES | <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I have just a final question in relation to the process for questions on notice. I wanted to know your understanding of, when a question is submitted to the Minister's office and sent to the department, what the process is in the response coming back to a member of Parliament.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: Can you repeat the question?</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'd like to understand the process of a question that is submitted as a question on notice. Once it's submitted to the Minister's office and then sent to the department, what is the process for it then to come back to the member?</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: This is almost going to sound like a pun, but if I can take that on notice—</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's fine.</p> | <p>I am advised: There has been no change in process under the new government.</p> |

Attachment QTON 26:

Children and young people in out-of-home care by case plan goal, as at 30 June 2023

| District | Case plan goal | | | Total CYP aged 0-17 years |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| | Adoption | Guardianship | Restoration | |
| Central Coast | 17 | 57 | 35 | 904 |
| Far West | | <5 | 5 | 94 |
| Hunter | 16 | 130 | 70 | 2,016 |
| Illawarra Shoalhaven | 16 | 44 | 89 | 963 |
| Mid North Coast | 10 | 44 | 65 | 904 |
| Murrumbidgee | <5 | 34 | 40 | 570 |
| Nepean Blue Mountains | 30 | 80 | 57 | 1,717 |
| New England | <5 | 76 | 31 | 935 |
| Northern NSW | 16 | 67 | 85 | 823 |
| Northern Sydney | 9 | <5 | 11 | 150 |
| South Eastern Sydney | 34 | 23 | 41 | 873 |
| South Western Sydney | 44 | 76 | 131 | 1,896 |
| Southern NSW | 10 | 41 | 30 | 413 |
| Sydney | <5 | 33 | 25 | 376 |
| Western NSW | 11 | 93 | 50 | 1,332 |
| Western Sydney | <5 | 36 | 42 | 716 |
| Statewide Services | | | | 41 |
| Total | 219 | 846 | 807 | 14,723 |

Notes:

1. The cohort of young people are aged 0-17 years in OOHC. Note that not all of them require a case plan, hence a small proportion had missing goals.
2. Cells with small values (<5) have been suppressed to maintain client confidentiality. The second smallest values are also suppressed when they can be calculated.

Source: ChildStory - CIW Annual

Attachment QTON 78 and SQ 286 - Children and young people who exited out-of-home care and restored to their parents by legal order type and Aboriginality, 2021-22 and 2022-23

| Legal order type | 2021-22 | | | 2022-23 | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Aboriginal CYP | Non-Aboriginal CYP | All CYP | Aboriginal CYP | Non-Aboriginal CYP | All CYP |
| Final | 106 | 165 | 271 | 107 | 155 | 262 |
| Interim | 12 | 37 | 49 | 16 | 46 | 62 |
| Temporary care arrangements | 33 | 55 | 88 | 33 | 44 | 77 |
| Unknown | 6 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 8 | 16 |
| Total | 157 | 265 | 422 | 164 | 253 | 417 |

Notes:

1. Non-Aboriginal CYP include CYP whose Aboriginality status is "Not stated".
2. Temporary care arrangements include CYP on legal order "Removal S43(1)".