

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

Tuesday, 4 September 2018

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

EARLY CHILDHOOD, ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

The Committee met at 9:00.

MEMBERS

The Hon. Lou Amato (Chair)

The Hon. Courtney Houssos

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile

The Hon. Walt Secord

The Hon. Natalie Ward

Ms Dawn Walker

PRESENT

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell, Early Childhood Education, Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education

UNCORRECTED

CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

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

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

The CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearing for the inquiry into the budget estimates 2018-2019. Before I commence I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay respect to the elders past and present of the Eora nation and extend that respect to other Aborigines present. I welcome Minister Mitchell and accompanying officials to this hearing. Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Early Childhood Education, and Aboriginal Affairs and Assistant Minister for Education.

Before we commence I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings.

It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside of their evidence at the hearing, so I urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they may make to the media or to others after they complete their evidence as such comments would not be protected by parliamentary privilege if another person decided to take an action for defamation. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

There may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or with certain documents to hand. In these circumstances, witnesses are advised that they can take a question on notice and provide an answer within 21 days. Any message from advisers or members' staff seated in the public gallery should be delivered through the Committee secretariat. Minister, I remind you and the officers accompanying you that you are free to pass notes and refer directly to your advisers seated at the table behind you.

Transcripts of this hearing will be available on the website tomorrow. To aid the audibility of this hearing I remind Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. In addition, several seats have been reserved near the loudspeakers for persons in the public gallery who have hearing difficulties. Finally, could everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

LESLIE LOBLE, Deputy Secretary, External Affairs and Regulation, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

GEORGINA HARRISSON, Deputy Secretary, Educational Services, Department of Education, affirmed and examined

JASON ARDLER, Head of Aboriginal Affairs, Aboriginal Affairs, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: All witnesses from departments, statutory bodies or corporations will be sworn prior to giving evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. I declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Early Childhood Education and Aboriginal Affairs open for examination. As there is no provision for a Minister to make an opening statement before the Committee commences questioning, we will begin with questions from the Opposition.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you, Mr Chair, and thank you, Minister. How often should a childcare centre operating in New South Wales expect to be assessed and rated by the New South Wales Government under the National Quality Framework?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When it comes to regulation and assessment and rating, we have a risk-based process for that assessment. I will say that compared with every other jurisdiction in the country New South Wales is leading in terms of the number of our services that have been assessed. We have had 96 per cent assessed in New South Wales. There is a risk assessment process in terms of the timing of when those assessments take place.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, that does not answer my question, which asked: How often should a childcare centre expect to be assessed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, it depends on their risk profile in terms of the assessment process. From the regulatory side of things, there is a process that takes place in terms of how high their risk assessment is. I might ask Ms Loble to talk through that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is okay. I do not need the specifics.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am allowed to answer the question and I would like her to add a little extra, if I may.

Ms LOBLE: The requirements are set out under the national law. We are fully compliant with those. As the Minister indicated, we have over 96 per cent of services assessed and rated.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thanks very much, Ms Loble.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: She is still answering your question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, how many centres does the department assess each year?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I can give you the figures for the last year. We have got just over 5,500 services in New South Wales. For the last financial year I can give you how many were assessed. Between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 a total of 1,252 assessment and rating visits were completed.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You said that 96 per cent of centres have been assessed. That means that there is 4 per cent of centres that have not been assessed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. The way that it works ideally we do not ever want to achieve, and we will never achieve, 100 per cent of assessment. The reason behind that rating process is new services are being approved every day and the services are given a time period, generally about 12 months, to embed their practice prior to going through the assessment and rating process. That does not mean there are not interactions with the department, because clearly there are in terms of setting up a service. But with the actual assessment and rating process, centres are given a time period to be able to start running and embed their practices before they go through the assessment and rating.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Does that mean 4 per cent of centres operating in New South Wales have not been assessed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, we do not anticipate that we will ever achieve 100 per cent assessment, for the reasons that I have outlined to you. But they have—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you guarantee that those 4 per cent of centres are in their first 12 months of operation?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What I am saying to you is the assessment and rating process is one interaction that the department has with services in terms of giving them that assessment and rating—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is not answering my question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am answering what I am saying—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I am allowed to ask the questions.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: And I am allowed to answer them.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking you: Can you guarantee that those 4 per cent of centres in New South Wales that have not been assessed by the Department of Education in New South Wales at all are all within their first 12 months of operation?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take that on notice because it is a regulatory matter.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You cannot guarantee it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I said I will take it on notice to get clarity around that for you.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many children then are attending centres in New South Wales that have not been assessed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I will take that on notice because I do not have that detail.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Loble, do you have that answer?

Ms LOBLE: No, I will have to take that on notice as well. But can I just explain some of the additional processes we have. It might be of interest to the Committee. Any new service would have to go through an approvals process and outside of assessment and ratings we conduct compliance visits and spot checks. We investigate any incident—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many of those spot checks would you do a year?

Ms LOBLE: Last year we did 55 but we did 1,777 compliance visits and 233 pre-approval, 90 post-approval. From time to time we will have a particular campaign around, for example, certain issues like supervision or other things so we will go through a number of services—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have just been advised that the 4 per cent are new services, just to clarify that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: They are all new services operating in their first 12 months.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is the information that I have just received.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. So the 4 per cent of services that are operating without being assessed in New South Wales are all in their first 12 months of operation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is the information I have just received. But, as Ms Loble just said, they still have to go through a regulatory process in order to start so there is still assessment of them as a service as they are set up. But with the actual official assessment and rating process they are given that 12 months, as I said in my earlier answer, to embed their practices before they are given their assessment and rating.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Therefore, you will guarantee that there are no centres operating for more than 12 months in New South Wales without being assessed.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have just answered that based on the information that I received.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking you to guarantee it.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have answered that question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are not guaranteeing that there are no centres—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do not put words into my mouth. I have said that the advice I have received is the 4 per cent of services that are yet to be assessed are within the 12 months. That is the information that I have just received.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Loble, of those 55 spot checks across the 5,500 centres in New South Wales, how many of those are unannounced?

Ms LOBLE: Spot checks are always unannounced. Compliance visits can also be unannounced and, as I said, nearly 1,800 of those were done as well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What is the definition of "unannounced"?

Ms LOBLE: I can give you an example. I have gone with staff myself. We just arrive at a service. We introduce ourselves. We show them our identification. We then ask to see the director.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There is no forewarning provided to the centres?

Ms LOBLE: No. There are other visits where there would be forewarning but visits like that—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So for those 55 spot checks, they are unannounced.

Ms LOBLE: As I said, there are more that are unannounced than just the spot checks.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, media reports on 11 June this year revealed that one third of New South Wales centres had not been assessed in the last five years.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Do not believe everything you read.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many children are at centres in New South Wales that have not been assessed in the last four years?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, I did not hear the question. Can you repeat the second part?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If the Government members will stay quiet—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I am entitled to speak.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, media reports on 11 June this year revealed that one third of New South Wales centres had not been assessed in the last five years. How many children are in centres in New South Wales that have not been assessed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will probably go back to my earlier answer, when I talked about the risk-based approach that we have to assessment and rating in New South Wales. As I said, there are more than 5,500 different service types in New South Wales. I might get Ms Loble to provide a little bit more detail, but there is a process in place in terms of those with a higher risk get visited more frequently and assessed more frequently. That is, effectively, the way that the process works.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think we have covered clearly that there is a risk-based assessment.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. That is how we rate the work.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My question is very clear: How many children in New South Wales are in centres that have not been assessed in the last five years?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take the specifics of that on notice because I do not have those figures.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You do not have that information before you?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I do not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Loble, do you have that information?

Ms LOBLE: Enrolments fluctuate by year, but I am happy to provide that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am informed, Minister, that that could be up to 59,700 students.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order—

The CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The member referred earlier to some quote from a media source. It might assist the Committee if we could be informed of what that media source is, and also—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Minister is well aware of the media source.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: —the source of the basis of this number. If there is a number quoted, what is the source of that number?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Minister can request that. She has plenty of staff behind her—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I do not have staff. I would like to know the source of that number.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you wanted to ask questions you could have taken your time. Mr Chair, this is just eating up my time.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I am not intending to eat up your time.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You have just eaten up two minutes of our time.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I would just like to understand the source of the number. Is the source there or are we just flinging out numbers?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Okay! Sorry, I am not allowed to do that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: We have been courteous and respectful. The Government members are not.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is fine. I am very happy to—

The CHAIR: Proceed.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Chair, I take offence at that. I am not being discourteous. I have asked for the source of the number.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This was a tactic to eat up our time and it is working very effectively. Three minutes have been taken up of our time.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Secord, it is not a tactic. I have just asked for the basis or the source of that number.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The story was in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you. That is all you needed to say. You could have said that 10 minutes ago.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You could table the article.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I am informed that this amounts to up to 59,700 students.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I will take that question on notice in terms of the figure. I do not know whether what you are saying is accurate, so I cannot—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, are you concerned by the fact that there are a third of childcare centres operating in this State that have not been assessed for the last five years?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have confidence in the assessment process that we have, which is risk based. I have confidence in the way that it operates in New South Wales.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You have confidence in it. Indeed, in the Chamber on 15 May you said that you are proud of your record. You are proud of your record that a third of the centres in New South Wales have not been assessed in the last five years.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I have said in my earlier answers, we have assessed and rated more services than any other jurisdiction in the country. We are at 96 per cent. We have 5,500. The figures speak for themselves.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes, 96 per cent of services have been assessed at some point in their history. But one third of them have not been assessed in the last five years.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Because we have a risk-based assessment process. That is the way that the system is set up.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Federal Government announced that it would be cutting \$20 million to childcare assessments in the recent Federal budget. What have you done about this?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You are referring to the national partnership agreement in relation to the National Quality Agenda. I have spoken about this in the House. I am very happy to reiterate those comments in that we were obviously disappointed when the Federal Government made that decision in the budget. We were not given any prior notice of that, which was disappointing. For New South Wales, that was \$6.9 million in terms of that funding. But, given that a lot of the work that New South Wales has done in compliance action, especially in the family day care services, has saved the Federal Government about \$150 million, we were quite unhappy with the decision of the Federal Government to make that choice. But in New South Wales we have reallocated funding to ensure that there will be no reduction in regulatory activity, no loss of Department of Education staff, and that assessment and rating visits and engagement with the sector will continue. I expressed my disappointment about that decision, both in person and in writing, to the former Minister Simon Birmingham as well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What was the response to that disappointment?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It was something that we discussed at an Education Council meeting, where all States and Territories were present. We asked the Federal Government to reconsider its decision. We have had ongoing discussions about that. There is obviously now a new education Minister, and I will be taking it up with him as well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What was the date of that Education Council meeting?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. You said that you reallocated funding. Where did that funding come from?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will ask Ms Loble to answer that one.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Let me just be clear. You have reallocated \$6.9 million of New South Wales funding because of this Federal cut.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So you can guarantee that no staff will be cut.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is right. There will be no reduction in regulatory activity and no loss of Department of Education staff, and assessment and rating visits and engagement will continue. For us, this is important and we want to make sure we have the robust system that we have in place. The safety of children is paramount; that is why we have been able to make up for the loss, basically.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The safety of children is paramount—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: —and that is why I am deeply concerned that there is a third of services that have not been assessed in the last five years, and there are—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, we have a risk-based process that I have confidence in. I have answered that question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have not finished asking you the question. There are a third of services that have not been assessed in the last five years. The Federal Government is cutting funding from this. You are being forced to reallocate State money to pick up the pieces, and you are expressing your disappointment to Federal counterparts but there has been no action.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We have taken action in New South Wales to ensure the safety of the children and that the processes continue. I am not going to apologise for that. That is what we have done because we take it seriously. I have expressed my concern to the Federal Government, as has every other State. There have been very open discussions about it.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I put to you that, rather than covering up for Federal cuts—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am not covering up Federal cuts.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: —for childcare assessments and ratings in New South Wales, you should be increasing the funding to allow all services to be assessed within a reasonable time frame. Five years is not a reasonable amount of time for a parent to be expecting their local childcare centre to be assessed. Surely you would agree with that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I have said, we have a process in place in terms of risk assessment. We are the highest of any jurisdiction in the country in terms of the number that we have assessed and rated. I stand behind those figures.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, are you familiar with the case involving a Wiradjuri woman—an Aboriginal woman—Ms Naomi Williams, who died after attending Tumut Hospital in southern New South Wales in January 2016?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I am not.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It was a story that gained national prominence. It was highlighted on the front page of the Wagga Wagga *Daily Advertiser*. To the newspaper's credit, it was put into the national spotlight and followed up by the *Guardian*, Special Broadcasting Service [SBS] and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC]. Mr Ardler, are you familiar with this case?

Mr ARDLER: No, not the specifics.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You are completely unfamiliar with this case.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: He said he is not familiar with the specifics.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you familiar with the coverage and the reporting, and the matters surrounding the case?

Mr ARDLER: Not in any detail.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you familiar in any form with the case?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I think he has answered.

Mr ARDLER: Not the specifics, no.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You have not heard of the case. On 22 July I met with Talea Bulger, a friend of the late Ms Williams, and Ms Sharon Williams, the mother of Ms Williams, in Tumut to discuss the case. By way of background, Ms Williams, the mother, was awarded the Australian Capital Territory Mother of the Year by Barnardos. The matter is going to be the subject of a coroner's inquest in Gundagai on 17 September. It will investigate whether Tumut hospital failed to take the proper—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: Are these questions for this Minister or for the Minister for Health?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am giving context. I was just getting to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I think we have spent quite a bit of time on the background.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It will investigate whether Tumut Hospital failed to take the proper history of the patient and she received a sub-standard service of care at a rural and regional hospital.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It is a Health question, surely.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: There are also questions because the mother has written to the State Government to say that she firmly believed her daughter was treated with disrespect and unprofessionally because—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Because she was a young Aboriginal woman.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I am making a point of order.

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am getting to the point now. The mother said that her daughter was treated with disrespect and unprofessionally because she was a young Aboriginal woman. This case has been taken up by the National Justice Project, and there is going to be a coroner's inquest on 17 September into this. I would like to know, will the Department of Aboriginal Affairs be sending a representative to the inquest?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will let Mr Ardler answer, but I am sure you will direct detailed questions around that process to the relevant Ministers when you have the opportunity.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I just figured that because—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: You have spent the last 10 minutes asking a question and giving an in-depth commentary. I ask that you give the Minister the opportunity to answer the question you have asked.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I was going to add that, obviously, I extend very deep sympathies to the mother. It must be a very traumatic time for her. I know that there is support available for families going through those inquests through the relevant departments. But I will ask Mr Ardler to provide any extra information on that.

Mr ARDLER: We could take the specific question on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So you have not heard of this case?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: He has already answered that question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is not what you said earlier. Now you say you have heard of the case.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If I can, Chair, Mr Ardler said that he did not have the specific details of that. He is answering the question. I think we should let him do that with a bit of respect, given the subject matter.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Okay, yes.

Mr ARDLER: What I would normally do would be to take advice from local staff who would know the family or would know the community and that is what I will do in this case and I will take that specific question on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Thank you very much. I would like a follow-up question. Several years ago there was the case of an Aboriginal death in custody, David Dungay.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is the latest information on that and what has been the Government's response? Have there been any recommendations or changes emanating from that incident?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is an ongoing inquest, as you would be aware. Currently it is the subject of an ongoing coronial inquest. Therefore, it is inappropriate to go into specific details, as I am sure you would understand. There has been support from the New South Wales Government through the Department of Justice to the family of Mr Dungay, including financial assistance for his father and stepmother to assist them in attending the inquest. There has recently been two weeks of evidence in the matter and it has been adjourned for further hearings and completion of the matter is my information.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you familiar with a program called Copwatch?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Specifically no. It is not within my portfolio.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Jason Ardler, have you ever heard of it?

Mr ARDLER: No.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is an app for mobile phones where they record arrests. Are you aware that a workshop was conducted last week in Dubbo by the National Justice Project after there were concerns about potential—and these are their words—"over-policing on the Aboriginal community in Dubbo"?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I would say that they are questions that you would need to address to either the Minister for Police or the Attorney General because that is not within my portfolio.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You do not do Aboriginal Affairs?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We do not do the things you are talking about in relation to that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I would have thought, Minister, that you would have had a passing interest. What do you do as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs then?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Can I answer that, Chair?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: As long as you do not eat up our time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: This is still at your time. Do you want me to stop? We can come back to it; that is okay.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No. The Chair has indicated that any questions answered after the bell will be deducted—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is all right. We will come back to it then. That is fine.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In the discussion about children and so on, of the children known to struggle with disabilities, how many are from Indigenous backgrounds?

Ms LOBLE: We can take that on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I will take that on notice in terms of the breakdown whether we have got that data. Obviously we have figures around those children who have received support at our preschool services through Disability, but I do not have the breakdown of that with me. I will see if it is available for you.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: This follow-up question may overlap with the Department of Health. Has there been any research as to the causes of that disability with those Indigenous children? For example, was the mother consuming alcohol during the pregnancy and so on?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is probably a question better directed to Health in terms of research around fetal alcohol syndrome. Is that what you are referring to? It would be a Health matter in terms of research.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Has the Minister encountered any obstacles in dealing with Indigenous students with disabilities that are unique to their situation?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In early childhood services?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is an interesting question. Obviously we have support for children who have those additional needs in our services and depending on the nature of what those needs are I can give you some more information about that. More generally, as Minister what I do when I visit the services and spend time talking to educators and staff, particularly those preschools and services that have higher Aboriginal attendance. We were in one in Taree just last week speaking to the staff about what support is needed.

Often a lot of the time it is greater family support, that access that they need to be provided through allied health and doing what we can to give those children that best opportunity. We know and there is a lot of research that indicates particularly those with additional needs that potentially they can be better treated at a younger age—things like they might be referred to, for example, a speech pathologist or an occupational therapist. If there is an opportunity for support for those children at an earlier age, we know that that is beneficial and it is certainly something I discuss with educators, teachers and directors when I visit those services.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: This may come under the Department of Education directly but is there a policy of trying to staff preschools in those areas with high Indigenous children levels with Indigenous teachers and Indigenous assistant teachers so they can relate to those Aboriginal children?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There are probably two parts to your question. There is specific support we have for Aboriginal programs within early childhood. Some of the examples that we have had include our Aboriginal Families as Teachers. We have put some money into that to eight community not-for-profit based organisations, helping to strengthen the ability of Aboriginal families to build that rich home learning environment, to understand the importance of early childhood education from a young age and encourage participation. We also have recently had the Start Strong Community Safety Net where we are working with communities in specific areas with high Aboriginal populations to establish new services.

We had the first one commence in the community of Weilmoringle just outside of Bourke, which you might be familiar with, and additional sites have been announced for Louth and Wanaaring as well. We also have Ngroo Walking Together, which is a program to help early childhood services build positive relationships with their local Aboriginal community. We have then had our Ningannah No More, which is an Aboriginal language program as well. In terms of support for Aboriginal staff, we also have Aboriginal scholarships available for people to get into early childhood education. We had a round last year and we have just announced the next round

as well. That is to encourage Aboriginal people who are interested in early childhood to help cover their costs when they would like to take up study in that area to encourage more into the sector.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: How many early childhood education centres exist in New South Wales that specifically cater for preschool children with disabilities?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Every early childhood service has the ability to have children who have additional needs is my understanding. I have certainly visited some centres that do really pride themselves on taking a higher level of children with additional needs but whether there is a breakdown of specific ones I might take that on notice to see what information there is for you, Reverend.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Do you know the number of students in early childhood education that benefit from programs aimed to help children with disabilities and whether that number has grown or reduced over the last decade?

Ms LOBLE: Reverend, as you would be aware, enrolments change from time to time and the particular mix of children changes from time to time, but at a point in time I can tell you that there were about 2,400 children who had received core funding for children with disabilities and about 1,800 who had been given high learning support needs funding. In addition we provide support to services with numbers of children with special needs. They also can have access to a special capital grants program to help with minor construction works or modifications that might be necessary to accommodate those children. There are many services that would have children with special needs enrolled in the service and as with any educational institution there is certainly an expectation and requirement that they comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and promote access and accommodation.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just following up with a question on this year's State budget, how much targeted funding goes towards preschool children with disabilities in early childhood education centres?

Ms LOBLE: It will fluctuate based on the enrolments, but the estimated budget for this year will be \$30 million.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What feedback have you been receiving regarding the success of the disability and inclusion programs?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, when I visit services and speak to those who do have children with extra and additional needs, it is something that we talk about. There are five components and what we have introduced in the last year and our new program—our Start Strong equity funding program—ensure that children who are enrolled in community preschool for 600 hours a year are now eligible as equity children from the age of three. There is high learning support needs funding, minor capital works funding—as Ms Loble mentioned—and the sector capacity building program, which is a training and support program for preschools to help them with the support that they provide for children with those needs. I mentioned scholarships before and we also have an early childhood early intervention scholarship program for professionals who work in community preschools to increase their skills in special education study. The feedback I have had has been quite positive.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: How do the State disability and inclusion programs work alongside the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]? Is there any harmonisation?

Ms LOBLE: The introduction of the NDIS will be an important addition to support those children and the funding will go towards physical needs, transportation needs and the like. Our funding goes to the educational services, programming and support that is provided within the education setting. We already work with the NDIS agency and expect to continue to do so. As the Minister mentioned, part of the reason we provide funding for sector capacity building within the early childhood sector is that we know that services will need to be interacting much more with the NDIS agencies and we provide support to them—that is part of what we provide.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Is there any tension in cooperating with the National Disability Insurance Scheme? Is it working in harmony?

The CHAIR: Sorry, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, your time has expired. We will move to Ms Walker.

Ms DAWN WALKER: I will start by getting a follow-up from you on the Butterfly Cave. I asked you about this last year and you informed me in the House that there was a plan of management being finalised.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You did ask me about it last year and the information I have is similar: Because it falls under the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage in terms of the specifics of a management plan, you would need to direct those questions to her.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Are you aware of where that is at? Has it been finalised; is it close to being finalised?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Again, you would have to ask those questions of her. I am not in a capacity to answer that.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Are you liaising with the Minister at all on this issue?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have spoken to her about it and her office as well. Obviously I am aware of the ongoing concerns of the community. You have raised those issues with me in the House, as have other members. But, as I said, ultimately the management of that issue falls under Minister Upton and you will have to ask those questions of her.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Is your department or ministry responsible for any aspect of the Butterfly Cave?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No.

Ms DAWN WALKER: None whatsoever?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No.

Ms DAWN WALKER: The passing of the Aboriginal Languages Act was a wonderful moment in Parliament, and I thank you for that. The Act talks about appointing a board. There was some discussion about the appointees to the board and the person's appropriate standing in the Aboriginal community was mentioned as one of the criteria. How far along are you with those appointments, and could you explain a little bit more about what the criteria mean in practical terms for appointing people?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will get Mr Ardler to speak to the specifics, but I can make some general comments about what has happened since the legislation passed. The Act was assented to on 24 October 2017 but is yet to commence. The Act will commence once I proclaim the Act and place an announcement in the *Government Gazette* on the Governor's behalf. Given that the Act requires the trust to develop the strategic plan within two years, it is highly likely that I will commence the important legislation once the trust is established to give it the opportunity to build that strategic plan. In the interim, the languages team with Aboriginal Affairs is progressing the establishment phase of the Act, which will include the governance to ensure the community leadership and guidance, which we spoke about.

Aboriginal Affairs has established three governance groups to guide the establishment phase: the Aboriginal Languages Establishment Advisory Group, an Aboriginal languages internal project group and an Aboriginal languages inter-agency advisory group. Those three governance groups have been meeting regularly. I was able to attend one of the meetings—the Aboriginal language dreaming workshop—earlier this year, on 20 June, where I meet with all three of the governance groups. We talked about establishing the future plans for the trust and the strategic plan. Obviously they were there for a period of time to do that. We will continue those conversations with the communities to inform the future direction of Aboriginal languages in New South Wales. But in terms of the requirements, I will ask Mr Ardler to comment.

Mr ARDLER: As you have suggested, the issue of the membership of the trust was the subject of much discussion as part of the community consultations. In fact, what the community asked was that we come back and have further discussions about that before the trust was established and membership determined. That is the process we are in now. We ran a competitive expression of interest process with an independent panel determining the successful candidates for that EOI. The successful candidates formed the community advisory group that the Minister mentioned and we are working with them around the next stages of community engagement, including looking at a statewide conversation around the establishment of the legislation.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Can I turn to the Makarrata? On 9 August 2018 seven of the largest Aboriginal organisations in New South Wales marched on Parliament House and demanded that the State Government come to a new agenda for Aboriginal rights, including the Makarrata process. At the time, the Premier issued a challenge to that protest to identify three priorities. What is your department doing to honour this process and are you looking to support the consultation process to identify these priorities?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: By way of background about the march for the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, I had met with them previously, as had the Premier, and we discussed with them a range of issues. That meeting is when the Premier indicated that they should come up with the three priorities as a peak group representing those seven organisations—as you pointed out—and bring those to the Government to talk about finding solutions to those priorities. That was just prior to the march and my understanding is that they are due to come back to us within a three-month period as to what those priorities are. We are waiting for

that information to come back. I will say that, as Minister, I do meet with those organisations individually to discuss other issues as they arise as well, so I do have a good working relationship with many of those peak bodies.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Just looking at what Victoria has done in terms of supporting the process of a State-based treaty, are you looking at following that lead in the face of Federal inaction on this issue?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When it comes to issues around treaty, in New South Wales our commitment to working with Aboriginal communities is strong. Our position is that any process leading towards treaty or treaties must be led by the Commonwealth Government and we understand that they are considering those issues as part of their process. But I will say here in New South Wales a lot of our policies, which have been developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities—and OCHRE is the best example of that—contain elements of treaty. Things around local decision-making and self-determination, the work we are doing in languages, the Stolen Generations scheme are all important policy areas that we are working on with community and we will continue to do that.

Ms DAWN WALKER: It appears that unlike other States, there is no peak body for Aboriginal artists in New South Wales. Are you aware of that?

Mr ARDLER: There is a newish Aboriginal peak body around the arts and cultural institutions. It was set up, I think, under the auspices of Museums & Galleries of NSW, or something to that effect. But I can certainly get the detail on that.

Ms DAWN WALKER: If you could, I would be very interested in that.

Mr ARDLER: Yes, absolutely.

Ms DAWN WALKER: What is the department doing to ensure Aboriginal artists, particularly in regional areas, are seeing not only the creative but also the economic benefits from their art? Is the department working on that?

Mr ARDLER: Not specifically. It is a matter for Arts NSW and Destination NSW.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is probably a question better directed to the Minister for the Arts. But I will take it on notice and see if we can find any more information. It may be that we will need to ask his agency and office for advice, but I am happy to take it on notice and find what we can for you.

Ms DAWN WALKER: On Wednesday early childhood educators in New South Wales will be walking off the job to protest the sector's unacceptably low pay. As you know, early childhood educators are overwhelmingly female and the low pay across this sector exacerbates the gender pay gap. Does the New South Wales Government support the educators in their pay claim? If the Federal Government will not address this issue, what action will you take to ensure educators in the New South Wales preschool and early learning sector will be paid at a level that reflects their training, skills and contribution to society?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When it comes to issues around pay parity, yes—as you mentioned in the preamble to your question—obviously I am aware of those matters and they are raised with me. But ultimately the rates of pay are set by the Fair Work Commission at a Federal level. I am aware of the intention for industrial action tomorrow; I have heard media reports about it as recently as this morning, as I am sure we all have. But ultimately that is a matter for the Federal Government and the Fair Work Commission.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Do you support the premise that the sector is low-paid for the skills— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We will come back to that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Loble, you said that the funds to make up for the Federal cut of \$6.9 million came from a reallocation within the department. Where did that money come from?

Ms LOBLE: The Government made the decision to reallocate funds.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did they come from within the department?

Ms LOBLE: Yes, but as the Minister said there is no impact on Department of Education staff or regulatory actions.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Where did it come from within the department?

Ms LOBLE: I will have to take that on notice in terms of the particular—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You honestly do not know that?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: She has answered the question.

Ms LOBLE: My responsibilities—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: The member has asked a question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is hard to believe.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Ms Loble has answered the question. The question probably should be directed to me.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Where did you reallocate it from? Who is going to miss out?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: There should be one question from one member at a time. I ask that the members take it in turn or decide between themselves, without commentary, what the question is and who is asking it.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, if the money has been reallocated from within the department, who is missing out?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We said we would take that question on notice in terms of the specifics.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You knew that the money had been reallocated from within the department. Where had it been reallocated from?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We have said we would take that question on notice. We have answered that question.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: The question has been answered.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This is a budget estimates hearing.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have answered the question to say I will take the specifics on notice. I have answered that.

The CHAIR: The Minister has answered the question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, you said that universal funding would be offered for three-year-olds as part of this budget. What proportion of three-year-olds are you budgeting to use this in the next 12 months?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, what was the question?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What proportion of three-year-olds are you budgeting to use this program in the next 12 months?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Proportion of three-year-olds that are using—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Chair, I do not think that I understand the question.

The CHAIR: Neither do I.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Could you clarify the question, please?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, I actually do not understand what you are trying to ask me.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As part of the budget, you announced what you called universal funding for three-year-olds. What proportion of three-year-olds are budgeted to use this in the next 12 months?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It is the same question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What proportion?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What proportion of three-year-olds in New South Wales are going to use it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Any three-year-olds who are wanting to attend or whose families want them to attend a community preschool next year will be eligible for the funding.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As part of the budget, how many three-year-olds are you expecting to use that?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Take it on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, just calm down.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is a straightforward question: How many three-year-olds?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order—

The CHAIR: She is trying to find information.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: She is going to answer your question. You do not need to keep badgering her.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sorry, I am just getting some clarity around it because the premise of the question is a little bit confusing. If you want the number of children who we think—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is a very straightforward question, Minister.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, you are asking for a proportion of children.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: The member has asked the Minister a question. I ask that you call her to order and allow the Minister to answer the question. Have some courtesy.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, any family who wants to send their three-year-old to a community preschool next year will be eligible to receive that funding. In terms of raw numbers or benefits of approximately the number of children who we think will benefit from it—is that what you are asking?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is exactly the question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Well, you did not say that. You asked about a proportion of children and that was confusing.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. I am asking how many three-year-olds across New South Wales are you planning to access what you call universal funding.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am going to take the specifics of that one on notice because, as I said, I do not think I understand the premise of your question properly.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This was the signature announcement of your budget.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, and I have said that what we will do—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are offering—

The CHAIR: The Minister said she would take it on notice.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Do you want the answer or do you just want to beat her up?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Over the next 12 months, how much do you plan to spend on three-year-olds attending preschools?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is a different question to the one that you asked me earlier. As I said—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is a fairly simple question, Minister.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Do you want the answer?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: Yet again you ask a question, then change and ask a different question and then go back.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is the same question that she cannot answer.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: Could the member please try to ask one question and allow the Minister to answer it before asking her a second one.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many three-year-olds do you expect to use your program next year?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, the specifics of that I will take on notice. The reason why is that we have the budget announcement of the extra almost \$200 million over the next four years; that includes capital components if services would like to extend the number of places that they have available.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I do not want the key lines. I want the specifics, Minister.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, but it is relevant. I am telling you it is—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: It has been repeatedly requested that the member allow the Minister to complete her answer. If she wants to chew up time with all of us arguing about it, we can do so. I am interested in the answer and I would like the Minister to be afforded the courtesy of an opportunity to answer before being interrupted yet again by Ms Houssos.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. The member will give the Minister the opportunity to answer the question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I was saying, there are opportunities for capital to increase the number of places, which would include three-year-olds. There will be enrolments within services, which will include three-year-olds. To give you the most accurate advice, I would like to take the specifics on notice because now that the funding has been announced, services know that there is support for all families, regardless of background and income, to access this in community preschools for their three-year-olds. The specific numbers will come into play as we collect that data, so I will take it on notice to give you the most accurate answer.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This was the signature announcement from the budget.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: The Minister has said that she will take it on notice.

The CHAIR: The Minister has answered the question.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You have not even let me ask the question, Natalie.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You have asked it three times, Ms Houssos.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is all right.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My question, which you can also take on notice, is what proportion of three-year-olds across New South Wales will then be expected to utilise this funding?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It is the same question.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, I will take the specifics on notice to get you the most accurate data in relation to that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, would you consider addressing the Productivity Commission's criticism that New South Wales has the lowest child-care subsidies of any State in Australia to ensure that the majority of New South Wales students can access early childhood education?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: My response would be that since we have been in government we have invested more in early childhood education. Our budget this year is double what the budget was in your last year in government. We have put more money in, we are increasing—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You have been in government for eight years; that claim is getting a bit old.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —the amount of money that is available for families. We have seen it make a difference where it is supposed to in terms of cost and choice for families. We know that since when we brought in Start Strong, we have seen a decrease in average fees by 25 per cent, 40 per cent for equity children.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, I am going to stop you there to ask you about how many days—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You are asking a question about government spending in this space—

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have received enough information; I have very limited time. How many days do three-year-olds have to attend preschools to be eligible for the funding?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The way that the funding operates is as it is for the year before school under Start Strong; it is 600 hours, which equates to about 15 hours per week. Then there is a sliding scale from that if they attend for less, and that is in line with our universal access arrangements.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is two days, thanks.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, how many people work in your ministerial office?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There are six currently.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you have a high turnover of staff in your office?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I would not say that I do.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We are not Labor.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Does a Mr Harris work in your office?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Tom Harris works in my office, yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Is he the same Harris that has been connected to the prominent Nationals donor, a person facing conviction for water theft involving the P&J Harris & Sons company?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I indicated earlier, Tom Harris commenced employment in my office earlier this year. I will add that all staff employed have made all necessary disclosures in line with the Department of Premier and Cabinet protocol. I am not going to make any further comment in relation to the employment of my staff.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How did you come to acquire Mr Harris?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: He was the successful candidate following a recruitment process.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I understand that he was in the office of the Deputy Premier, John Barilaro, before he commenced in your office.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is correct.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: When did the recruitment process for Mr Harris begin?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That was a process that we had. Individuals were interviewed for the position, and Tom was the successful candidate.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Was it a rigorous recruitment process?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have answered that question. We had a recruitment process, and he was the successful candidate.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I take that to be a no, it was not a rigorous process.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, do not put words into my mouth. I said we had a recruitment process, and he was the successful candidate.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How many candidates were in competition for that—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have answered that question. People were interviewed for that position, and Tom was the successful candidate. I have answered that question and I am not going to provide a running commentary on that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am going to exercise my option to continue to ask those questions.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: That is alright; I will keep giving you the same answers.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How many applications were received for—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have answered that question in that there was a recruitment process.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How about you take that question on notice, as you have for other questions?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, I have answered your question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Is there a reason why you will not take it on notice?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, because I have answered it.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Then take it on notice.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: The Minister has said that she has answered the question. I know the member is entitled to keep asking the same question and getting the same answer and that is wasting his time, but I would suggest that the member ask a different question, because the Minister has answered that one.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Did anyone in The Nationals direct you to employ him?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Were you involved in the selection process of Mr Harris?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, because, as the Minister, I obviously have say over who is employed in my office.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Nothing to see here, Walt.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, there is a lot to see. This Minister's office has become—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: Does the member have a question?

The CHAIR: Order!

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, has your office become a safe haven for water thieves?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have answered the question—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: That is not a question pertaining to the budget.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —in that all staff who are employed in my office have made all necessary disclosures, in line with the Department of Premier and Cabinet protocol.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order. The Minister did answer that question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, I take you back to early childhood education. What is your response to the anti-vaccination movement and people wanting to enrol their unvaccinated children in child care?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: They are not able to enrolled children who are unvaccinated into child care. We passed legislation in relation to that last year, as you would know.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, which I supported.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: There are rules in New South Wales whereby you cannot have a child who is not vaccinated enrolled in child care unless there are specific medical reasons or they are on a catch-up, as you would be well aware.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you aware that there are moves, particularly in Sydney's northern beaches and northern New South Wales, to set up childcare centres for unvaccinated children, centres where unvaccinated children can be actively brought together?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It is not allowed for individuals to set up services like that that are not licensed and regulated. People who are or are intending to set up services like that, as you suggest, would be in breach of laws and be liable for prosecution. It is not possible for somebody to set up a service like that and be operating legally, as I understand it.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Does Ms Loble want to add anything?

Ms LOBLE: No, other than to say that is right. Neither the Commonwealth nor the State will fund any service that has not received official approval, and those processes are rigorous and clear. We are very clear that we will not fund or approve a service that does not comply with the vaccination requirement.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: As part of your inspections of childcare centres, do you have criteria to ensure that all children enrolled in childcare centres that are inspected by you have their paperwork for childcare vaccinations in order?

Ms LOBLE: Yes, we do. On any visit for any reason to a service we check Working With Children and immunisation schedules for every child who is enrolled, even if they are not there are on that day. We go through that entire list with the administrative staff and director of the service.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: In the last budget year, how many childcare centres in New South Wales came to your attention for paperwork that was insufficient or having unvaccinated children on the premises?

Ms LOBLE: I am sorry, I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, how much of the State is now in drought?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It was 100 per cent most recently; I think the most current statistic is 99 per cent or 100 per cent.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: How does this question relate to the Minister's portfolio?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As a regionally based Minister, you have seen the effects of the drought firsthand?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Absolutely.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I note that on 30 July this year the Premier and the Deputy Premier announced a drought package of \$500 million. What specific initiatives were in that package for Aboriginal people?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I would have to take that on notice, if the package has come through the Department of Primary Industries and the Premier. Obviously there is a lot of whole-of-government support for regional communities and that support goes to everyone who lives in regional communities; the package does not distinguish. I can take specifics on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Did you ask the department to give you advice on specific initiatives for remote Aboriginal communities suffering from the drought?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Which department?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Your Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The drought assistance in the measure that you are talking about came through the Minister for Primary Industries.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am asking whether you consulted with your department about specific initiatives that would be required for remote Aboriginal communities or Aboriginal people affected by the drought.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, that was a response that came as a whole-of-government response from the Premier and the Ministers.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: To assist, for example, water quality issues in Wilcannia, where Aboriginal communities have no water because their water has been taken away.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: But matters relating to water quality in regional areas fall under Minister Blair, so you would need to direct those questions to him.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Minister, the issue of a government response to the drought has been canvassed publicly for weeks. Did you not ever consult with your department about what specifically the government could be doing to support remote Aboriginal communities?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, the announcement made by Minister Blair, the Deputy Premier and the Premier was for a whole-of-government response to support communities, including Aboriginal people who live in those communities.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, what is the current number of outstanding Aboriginal land claims in New South Wales?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The current number is 34,010—that is my understanding—as at 30 June 2018.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What are Aboriginal Land Agreements?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Aboriginal Land Agreements are mechanisms that we have introduced to expedite settlement of some of those standing land claims.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: When were they established?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: When were they first established, Jason? Last year? Primarily the matters relating to land claims, as you would know, fall under Minister Toole as Minister for Lands, including Aboriginal land agreements.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes, but you might have a passing interest in them.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Of course I do. I know that in the Department of Industry there are eight Local Aboriginal Land Councils [LALCs] and their respective local councils which are involved in or have commenced negotiations for the land agreements. And there are also limited negotiations occurring with a further four.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Ardler, how many Aboriginal land agreements have occurred under the O'Farrell, Baird and Berejiklian governments?

Mr ARDLER: To my knowledge, there are none finalised.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: None?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, but they are all underway.

Mr ARDLER: As the Minister said, there are 12 in various stages of negotiation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What I will say to that, too, is—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: So none?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —it is a process that we have with the land council and the local government to work through. They can settle multiple land claims at a time. But as is appropriate with these matters and with Aboriginal Affairs, there are periods where you do consultation and the process needs to be thorough to make sure that they are all considered. As we said, the comprehensive local negotiations have started between those land councils. I am happy to provide information to you as to where they all are, plus the four limited negotiations as well, but if you do have specific questions around the process, the time, how many, you need to direct those to Minister Toole because they are questions for him.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: There are 34,010 outstanding land claims in New South Wales. You referred to Aboriginal land agreements and then you said there is none. Have you sought advice from your department about why this area is not progressing? Why do we have none?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As Mr Ardler and I have said, there is none completed—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Does it not serve—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The member's time has expired.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —but the process is underway in a number of areas—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But have you sought any questions—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: —to consider that.

The CHAIR: The member's time has expired.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But why? Why? Why do we have none?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Your time has expired.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I do not care.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do not be rude. You are being rude.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: The member's time has expired.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I wanted to find out why there was none. My question was simple—none.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You are eating into Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's time.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We have answered that. Because the process is underway, as I mentioned. The process is underway.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: The Hon. Walt Secord is eating into Ms Dawn Walker's time and Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's time.

The CHAIR: Order! If the crossbench is prepared to give up some of their time for the Hon. Walt Secord, I will leave it up to their discretion.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I do not think Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile will. He has a number of questions.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Stop talking.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Mr Secord can put it on notice. That is the system. Minister, how is the syllabus set for children with disabilities in early childhood education?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, he is having a hard time reading your handwriting.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order: I ask that the member withdraw that comment. That is offensive.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What's that?

The CHAIR: Your comment in regards to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The member is chewing into the time of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile cannot read the Minister's handwriting on the questions?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That is offensive.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I withdraw that statement.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: That is a ridiculous comment.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I know, Fred. It is ridiculous, isn't it?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: He is now just chewing into the member's time. Do not fall for it, Fred.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have typed notes prepared. There are no handwritten questions from the Minister.

The CHAIR: Would you like to hear the question again, Minister?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, I would.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I would love you to give me questions. There is no problem. How is the syllabus set for children with disabilities in early childhood education?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Under the early learning framework for all the services and including those children who do have an additional needs there is a framework set for the information that is taught to them. Ms Loble, did you want to add some more in relation to that?

Ms LOBLE: Yes. Unlike early childhood education, it is very much play based and is not nearly as structured as you might expect to see a syllabus in schooling years K-12. The Early Years Learning Framework sets out certain areas of development and learning and provides broad discretion for services, but there is an expectation that all children will have access to that framework.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: And what criteria are used in the syllabus that measure success rate?

Ms LOBLE: Again, quite different from schooling. There is no literacy and numeracy testing. There is no content assessment as you might see in the schooling years. It is quite a different concept and it is very much about developing a whole child.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: A question for Mr Ardler: I have seen reports that the Federal Government and/or the State Government are planning special commemorations relating to Captain Cook's navigation of Australia and so on. I understand some land councils are looking at this as well. In the spirit of reconciliation, is there anything that you know of coming out of your area in a year or two years' time, not tomorrow, so that the Aboriginal people will be integrated into whatever is done? I know that a big statue of Captain Cook is going to be built. I am not sure who is going to be paying for it—the Federal Government?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: If I might initially provide some information on that for you, Reverend, the project that you are referring to for the monument at Kurnell, you are right, it is a 50-50 funding between the State and Federal governments. That is a development that will include a new visitors centre, café

and exhibition space, ferry wharfs at La Perouse and Kurnell, and disabled access. There will be an aquatic monument and also improvement works to the existing monument. It is also important to say that in relation to that the Government is working closely with the local Aboriginal community in that area in terms of the revitalisation of that site. My understanding is that the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council has backed the project. They will be participating in the community consultation process which will guide that redevelopment. Obviously that is an opportunity, that redevelopment of that site, to tell the story of the place in a way that is inclusive of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history. That is certainly the intention of the project.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Excellent.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Do you want to add anything else to that, Mr Ardler?

Mr ARDLER: No, I think that covers it.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You mentioned some of those developments as part of that commemoration. Did you say Indigenous centre?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The information that I have, and the lead agency on this is environment and heritage, is that it will be a visitors centre. That is what I said: a new visitors centre, café and exhibition space. In terms of what is specifically displayed and used there, because we have the involvement of the local Aboriginal community in those discussions I am confident in that process. Also, I guess more broadly, events and activities that relate to the anniversary of Cook's landing will not happen in isolation. The Department of Premier and Cabinet will lead coordination with government agencies and activities and, as you say, as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs it is important that Aboriginal history is part of that as well.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I agree with that 100 per cent. So it could include an Indigenous centre?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said, it is an exhibition centre. In terms of the specifics of what will be involved, I am assuming those discussions will happen as part of that consultation process. But the important thing is that the local Aboriginal community and the land council are involved in the process. I feel confident in that process.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: You are nodding your head, Mr Ardler. Do you want to add anything to the question?

Mr ARDLER: Only that I am aware that there have been ongoing conversations between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the local Aboriginal community as part of a master planning process for the Kurnell and the Kamay Botany Bay National Park site. So the views and interests of the local Aboriginal people have been built into those. I would be confident that any visitors centre and any exhibitions that are built as part of that would incorporate the Aboriginal perspective of the site and its significance to local Aboriginal people.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Do you have time to be personally involved with that? Are you just hearing about it or are you involved because of the role you have?

Mr ARDLER: I attended and participated in some earlier workshops around the master planning process, through my existing role and because I am a resident of the local government area and I previously worked as the head of heritage within the national parks service. I wore at least three hats in those conversations.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Very good. I am happy with that.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Minister, I would like to go back to the Butterfly Cave. I am very concerned that as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs it appears that you have no influence and certainly it appears no involvement, where it would seem very appropriate that you would. I have been to the site and I have been shown the site by local Aboriginal people. It is obviously a very significant site for Aboriginal women. I have seen the development and the effect that that is going to have on the site, basically making it unusable. The water that goes into the cave has dried up. The road and houses are abutting this ceremonial site. My question is do you see any avenue whereby your ministry and the department could become involved so that we can get a resolution for the Butterfly Cave?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said in my earlier answer, because it falls with Environment and Heritage, it is declared and protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, as you know, so primarily it is a matter for Minister Upton. Previously my answer I gave to you in the House was that I spoke about encouraging all parties to work together to see a resolution for the community's concerns. There are responsibilities of the

Government and various Ministers, as you would appreciate, and the advice that I have is that this is one that is for Minister Upton.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Are you able to liaise with the Minister and come back to this Committee with information on where it is at?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am happy to take that on notice. I have raised it with her and our office has certainly spoken about it but I will take it on notice to see if there is any more that I can give you or more that I can do.

Ms DAWN WALKER: You can report back.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I am happy to do that.

Ms DAWN WALKER: I want to tease out some things with "Change the Date". That is something we have spoken about in the House. Last year you indicated that although it was a Federal matter you certainly would be supporting a change to the date that was more inclusive for the whole community.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I do not think I said I supported a change to the date. I said that as Australia Day it should be a day where we all come together as a nation to celebrate the diversity of Australian cultures and that obviously should include our first Australians. I still have that view.

Ms DAWN WALKER: You did say that perhaps 26 January was not that day.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I do not believe that I said that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You are mixing her up with Mr Adam Marshall.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Would you support changing the date—

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: No.

Ms DAWN WALKER: —that we celebrate in New South Wales because, as you know, it is possible under the Public Holidays Act 2010 for New South Wales to take a lead on that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The New South Wales Government's position is the date on which Australia Day is celebrated should not be changed.

Ms DAWN WALKER: While the date remains as 26 January, are there any steps that your Government is going to take to make that day more culturally inclusive?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said before, I feel very strongly that any celebrations that occur on Australia Day should be inclusive of all Australians. Obviously, celebrations happen right around the nation down to a local level. Certainly Australia Day celebrations that I have been involved with over the years as a member of Parliament and as an individual—and I am sure other Committee members would be the same—have been inclusive and acknowledging local Aboriginal history. I would encourage that to continue. I think it is important. Of course, I understand that for many Aboriginal people it is a difficult day and I respect that. But it should be about celebrating all that is great about Australia and that absolutely includes our First Australians.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Have you been consulting with communities on changing the date or making 26 January more inclusive before the date is changed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I visit a lot of Aboriginal communities across New South Wales. I meet with a lot of Aboriginal people to talk about a range of issues. Primarily the issues that are raised with me as Minister relate to providing opportunity, whether it is around education, employment, the work that we are doing under Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment [OCHRE]. They are the things that people are raising with me as Minister, the work we are doing with languages, the stolen generations, things I have outlined before. They are predominantly the things that are discussed with me as to what are the priorities that they want me as Minister to focus on, and that is what I do.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can we take up the Government questions?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I move that only if it is done fairly between all the parties.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Government questions?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No. Minister, what is the—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Ms Dawn Walker finished and there is some time available. Why do we not use it and be constructive? Let us ask some more questions.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We can take up the time arguing. Point of order—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister, do you support the use of—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am mindful of time.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It is not your time.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Time is precious.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It is not your time.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Point of order—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Stop the clock.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That does not work; it is not question time.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You cannot stop time. You might think you are God but that is pushing it too far. The Committee can have a deliberative.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I move that if there is additional time it be divided fairly between each of the three parties asking questions, not just taken up by the Hon. Walt Secord.

Ms DAWN WALKER: I will continue with questions. Minister, under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act you have the power to appoint administrators for local Aboriginal land councils. How many land councils are currently run by administrators?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Currently there is only one land council in New South Wales that is under administration, that is, the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council in the Newcastle area.

Ms DAWN WALKER: How long has that been run by administrators?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The former Minister appointed an administrator to the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council in October 2016 following an investigation into the affairs of the land council. The report on the investigation revealed serious financial mismanagement of the land council and substantial breaches of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act by the land council. The administrator was appointed to perform all of the functions of the land council. The administrator's term of office has been extended and will expire on 30 November 2018.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Is that land council responsible for the area of the Butterfly Cave?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will have to take that on notice.

Ms DAWN WALKER: I suggest it may well be. Could you take that on notice and get back to me?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes. I am not sure of the specific boundaries and whether that is included but I will check.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Has the Minister liaised with the local Aboriginal land council in the vicinity of the Butterfly Cave about the issue there?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I have to take that on notice about what contact has been made.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Would you see it as appropriate that you liaise with the local Aboriginal land council responsible for that development?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: As I said earlier, because the primary responsibility for that falls to Minister Upton my ability to influence that is very limited. If I am not able to provide that assistance as the Minister not responsible, then there are certainly things that I would consider as to the benefit of that contact. I can check for you or if the department has had any correspondence with them about that matter. I will take it on notice.

Ms DAWN WALKER: How is the performance of the administrator assessed?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Having an administrator and having extensions, is that what you are referring to?

Ms DAWN WALKER: Yes. Let us take that particular case, if there is only one. The administrator was put in place in October 2016. Has there been an assessment on the performance of the administrator?

Mr ARDLER: The administrators once appointed operate independently of the Minister and of the department but they are required to furnish monthly progress reports. It is really on the basis of assessing the progress. We get those reports every month, the Minister gets those reports every month, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council [NSWALC] gets those reports every month. If there were issues and concerns arising out of those reports then that would be the trigger for continuing or extending or discontinuing the term of the administrator.

Ms DAWN WALKER: Is the term open?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The administrator is appointed for a period of time, but there are opportunities for extension if there is more work to do. The recommendations on extension come from the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council to me as Minister. Effectively, if the council feels that there is an opportunity or a need for that extension to continue, that is a decision I make based on the recommendation from the NSWALC. That is the process.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have been pleased to see Aboriginal smoking ceremonies at quite a few official events. Is the Government actively promoting them—I assume there may be some costs involved—and funding them? Frequently at these events an Aboriginal elder welcomes the audience on behalf of the Aboriginal community. Is that something you are encouraging and supporting?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Absolutely, and I think all of us would have seen an increase in elders giving an acknowledgement or welcome to country. That is something that is negotiated with the local community around the different events. It is wonderful when we attend official events and we have those welcomes and smoking ceremonies. I think it is incredibly important, particularly acknowledging the local Aboriginal community and the importance of their history. It is very heartening to see that and, of course, I encourage that. As I said, I am very pleased how often that occurs. It is respectful and it should take place.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I am not sure if there are any financial involvements or whether the Government could consider, where necessary, reimbursing costs. An elder may have to travel some distance to get to a government event. Can their travel costs be met?

Mr ARDLER: It is usual practice for people to be reimbursed either individually or through the organisation they represent.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: It would also depend on the individual event and who was hosting it as to whether that support would be provided. As you rightly point out, this is increasing and there is more acknowledgement of Aboriginal culture and community. That is very appropriate and pleasing to see.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I think it is excellent.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I agree with you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I have a quick question that is not highly political. There have been recent reports of the incidence of rheumatic heart disease in the Northern Territory in Indigenous communities being among the highest in the world. What research or programs are in place in New South Wales—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Point of order: That is a Health question.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: It is about rheumatic heart disease in Indigenous communities.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You are again asking the Minister questions—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I have one question.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I have not finished my point of order. The Hon. Walt Secord continues to ask questions of the Minister that are outside her portfolio. [*Time expired.*]

The CHAIR: The time has expired.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Minister—

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The time has expired.

The CHAIR: The time has ended.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: The Minister can take the question on notice.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You should direct it to the Minister for Health.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You do not know.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The Minister for Health will be appearing on Friday.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister Mitchell and your officers, for attending this hearing. The Committee has resolved that answers to questions on notice should be returned within 21 days. The secretariat will contact you in relation to the questions that you have taken on notice. Thank you all for your time.

(The witnesses withdrew)

The Committee proceeded to deliberate.