

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Division 36: Communities — Services 1 to 6, Child Protection; Women’s Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services, \$1 017 328 000 —**

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Ms S.F. McGurk, Minister for Child Protection; Women’s Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services.

Mr M. Rowe, Director General.

Mr M. Richardson, Director, Management, Accounting and Financial Analysis.

Mr P. Payne, Executive Director, Regulation and Quality.

Mrs R. Green, Deputy Director General, Community Services.

Ms C.H. Irwin, Assistant Director General, Strategy and Partnerships.

Mr M. Crevola, Chief Finance Officer.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. It is my intention to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. This estimates committee’s consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information she agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister’s cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 1 October 2021. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

I give the call to the Member for Vasse.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to item 6 on page 519 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the forward estimates for care arrangements and support services for children in the chief executive officer’s care. Why is there an anticipated increase in costs when page 517 states that the total number of children in care has reduced from 5 498 to 5 344, a 2.8 per cent reduction and the first reduction since 1997, and the number of Aboriginal children in care reduced from 3 082 to 3 056, a reduction of 0.8 per cent, which is the first reduction since 1996?

**The CHAIR:** Member, there are three questions there. To make this more efficient, maybe we will get the minister to answer the first question you asked and then you can drill down into the detail. The first question you asked was: why has the cost increased for the same number of individuals?

**Ms S.F. MCGURK:** The reduction of children in care that the member refers to is something that we are very proud of as a government—perhaps the member has heard me speak about that in question time in the Legislative Assembly—but it is not something that we take for granted. The member may have referred to this in her question. It is the first reduction in total numbers since, I think, 1998—for Aboriginal children in care it is since 1996. There has been in place for some time an assumption within child protection budgeting that there will be an increase in the number of investigations and the number of children in care. That is the short answer to what the member is asking. We are assuming that because of population growth and also because of the complexity of the situation facing families and the number of children coming into care—the attention and care that we need to give them—there will be growth, and that is what we have budgeted for.

**The CHAIR:** You might have further questions, member.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes, my further question relates to page 518.

**The CHAIR:** You are on the same point. You had a number of questions. Are you asking the rest of the questions you had there, or not?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I think the minister has answered them all.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, is this a different topic?

**Ms L. METTAM:** It is a slightly different topic, yes. I refer to service 6 on page 518, care arrangements and support services for children in the CEO’s care and the desired outcome, and the statement —

Children and young people in the Chief Executive Officer's ... care receive a high quality of care and have much improved life outcomes.

I note that the review into residential care placement decisions report was released last week. It highlights that the opposite appears to be occurring with regard to children in the care of the CEO who have been subject to sexual abuse and rape. Why did the department place young victims in the same residences as the perpetrators?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is the question why some children with harmful sexual behaviours were placed in the same residential facilities as other children?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

[9.10 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Practice guidelines for children with very difficult behaviours have been in place in the department for some time. That is the nature of children in care, particularly those in residential care. They will have a series of challenges, including behavioural challenges or difficulty regulating their behaviour, or past trauma that has not been resolved. Some of those difficult behaviours include harmful sexual behaviours. A risk assessment is done to determine what placements are best for those young people depending on the nature of those behaviours, including whether they may be placed in group homes with other children. Risk assessments are done to determine whether they should be placed with other children at all. That is probably the best answer I can give to the member's question. The practice guidelines contemplate that it is possible for children with harmful sexual behaviours to be placed in group homes. However, when those behaviours are of an extreme nature, some of those children will be classed as what is called a reportable offender, so the court will decide that their harmful sexual behaviour is of such a difficult nature that they become categorised under the law as a reportable offender. The department has made a decision that no children who are notified as reportable offenders by the court will be placed in group homes with other children. That is when the department knows that that child is a reportable offender.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Knowing that a child exhibits harmful sexual behaviours, how can the Department of Communities, which is meant to be protecting children, justify such a decision—this has obviously been expressed by the Commissioner for Children and Young People—when it has knowingly allowed for someone with harmful sexual behaviour to be in the same residential care as a victim of child sex abuse?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I referred to some of these issues in the Parliament recently, and the investigation by the Commissioner for Children and Young People into the department's policies and practices of placing children with harmful sexual behaviours in residential care settings. This independent review was tabled in the Parliament only last week. In my response, I said that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse referred quite a bit to children with harmful sexual behaviours. In fact, one of the things that can occur when young children are abused is that their perception of sexuality changes and they start to demonstrate some sexualised behaviours as a result of that abuse. The royal commission investigated and talked about this matter quite a bit. In fact, around Australia, and internationally, there is an emerging body of work to understand what is considered age appropriate and, if you like, normal behaviour, on what is a long continuum—for instance, what matters are perhaps concerning but not considered harmful sexual behaviours, what are harmful sexual behaviours, and then what are quite serious behaviours. As I said, in some instances, the court will determine whether some of those children are actually reportable offenders. As a result of the investigation by the children's commissioner, the department made a decision that when it notes that young people are reportable offenders, they will not be placed with other children. First of all, the royal commission talked about this issue and made a number of recommendations on how we deal with these matters. In fact, the federal government and all jurisdictions agreed that a national centre will look at best practice and responses to children with harmful sexual behaviours. The federal government has not yet made a decision about establishing that national centre but I have raised it with the appropriate federal minister, Minister Ruston, and we understand that a decision is imminent. It is an emerging body of work to determine how we respond to children with harmful sexual behaviours, how we identify them, what treatment practices are considered, and the best approach. That is the first point.

The second point is that in a residential care setting, each child has a safety plan developed in conjunction with their care team that identifies possible risks posed or experienced by the child. The plan contains specific strategies to mitigate those risks to the child and to others. That is generally what occurs. When a child exhibits harmful sexual behaviours, a risk assessment is carried out by the department. That is contemplated in the practice manual that governs the departmental workers or the community sector organisation workers who work with those children.

Training is currently being rolled out to residential staff to improve the identification of and responses to children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours. That was another response to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's report that we spoke about before. This training includes indicators of sexual abuse and harm, responding to disclosures, ensuring that children's voices are heard, and reporting processes. That system is similar to the traffic lights framework produced by an organisation called True Relationships and Reproductive Health. As I said, there

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

is an emerging body of understanding and response on how to deal with harmful sexual behaviours. As a result of the work that has been done by the Department of Communities, we are increasing the capacity of our care team staff and residential care staff to understand what we know about that work through the rollout of training and ensuring that individual safety plans are done for young people placed in care settings.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The minister has referred to the report that was tabled last week and to the case that highlighted a number of concerns. As was highlighted in the report, the victim, Macie, said that she had raised concerns about Lee on a number of occasions and the threats that she felt because of his behaviour. What commitment has the department or the minister made to ensure that those recommendations will be implemented?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I have addressed that question, which I mentioned in Parliament last week. The department has made a commitment that it will not knowingly place a reportable offender—a young person with harmful sexual behaviours—in a residential care setting with other young people. That change of policy was made by the department as a result of that case and the investigation by the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

[9.20 am]

**Ms L. METTAM:** How many times has this occurred, and are there still any instances where victims and perpetrators are housed together in the same residence?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There are no instances now where reportable offenders are placed in residential care settings with other children.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What about since 2017? Is the minister aware of —

**The CHAIR:** With all due respect, member, you might want to limit that, because that may cover a previous term of government.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I will rephrase that. How many times has this occurred since the minister has been Minister for Child Protection?

**The CHAIR:** We are dealing with this budget, member. I do not know that you can ask that.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I would also ask the member to refer to a particular line item in the budget so we can be clear on what we are talking about in relation to the budget.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay. I refer to budget paper No 2, *Budget Statements Volume 2*, and the line item “Child Protection Assessments and Investigations”. In the “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” table, it states that the outcome is that children and young people needing protection are safe from abuse and harm.

**The CHAIR:** This is a different page from the one you cited before for this line of questioning.

**Ms L. METTAM:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Page 518?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Page 518. It is the same area, but I would say that this is much to do with —

**The CHAIR:** All right, which paragraph?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Service 6, “Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO’s Care”.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, so we are back on page 519.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am just asking: how many times have young victims been in the same residence as perpetrators since the start of the forty-first Parliament?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Sorry; I am a bit unclear about what the member’s question is. Is she asking about young people who are victims who have been in the same residential care setting as their perpetrator—was that the question?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Victims of what, and perpetrators of what?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Victims of child sexual abuse—how many times have we seen instances where there have been victims like Macie in the same residence as perpetrators such as Lee? How many other occasions is the minister aware of?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member will have to be more specific. If she says “victims like ‘Macie’”, it gives me no indication of what she is talking about, at all; and, perpetrators of what? In the child protection system there are a number of children who have been harmed or who are at risk of harm; that is the nature of them coming into the child protection system. I need to be clear about what the member is asking if she wants me to give her an accurate answer.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms L. METTAM:** I will try again. How many children who have been under the care of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and who have been in the CEO's care have been exposed to other children who have expressed characteristics of harmful sexual behaviour?

**The CHAIR:** Member, do you mean how many instances is the minister aware of? Is that what you are talking about? Does that assist?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** With all due respect, that is such a broad question. At the moment there are 5 300 children in the CEO's care and over the course of the year there will be many more because the nature of child protection is that children come in and go out—they might be in the system for 12 months and then go out of the system—so the number we give is how many people are in the CEO's care at the end of a financial year. I need the member to be a little more specific. If she is asking how many children have been placed in a residential care setting with other children who are reportable offenders—I suspect that that is what she is asking—I cannot answer that question here at all, and I suggest that the member place it on notice. I am asked those questions very frequently by my opposition counterpart in the upper house and I answer them. I suspect that is what the member is asking. If the member is asking how many children there are with harmful sexual behaviours, as I tried to indicate before, this is actually an emerging body of work. One person's version of harmful sexual behaviour is not the same as another person's, so state governments and the federal government are trying to establish some authorities to support some authoritative work on this matter, to recognise, identify and treat and respond to harmful sexual behaviours, as distinct from normal, age-appropriate sexual behaviours, in young people. We want to make sure that we can improve that area of work. In fact, the Western Australian state government is leading some of that work with the establishment of the WA Centre for the Pursuit of Excellence in Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect. We are trying to do some of that work, but just to bring this back to the member's question, if I understand correctly, she is asking how many children have been placed in residential care settings with other children who are reportable offenders, and as I said, I cannot answer that question here. I suggest that the question be placed on notice.

**Ms L. METTAM:** In relation to children who have been identified as having harmful sexual behaviours, when was the minister first made aware that this practice was occurring and that children who had exhibited harmful sexual behaviours were living in residential care with other children who were under the care of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** As I mentioned before, the current case practice manual for the department contemplates that this is possible, and has done for some time. As far as I am aware, I inherited that as a minister, and that has been part of the practice manual for some time. I have answered questions on notice in respect of this particular point. There is a risk assessment done as to the nature of those children's behaviours, whether they are harmful sexual behaviours or other challenging behaviours that could cause a risk to other young people in a residential group home or setting. An assessment is done by the care team—part of the care plan is about whether those risks can be managed safely—and the placement arrangements are put in place. For instance, it might be that the risks cannot be managed, so the child will not be placed in a group home, even though there is a vacancy that could mean they otherwise would be in a group home. We have some children and young people who are placed on their own, with their own dedicated carers, as a result of their challenging behaviours, whether they are harmful sexual behaviours or perhaps violent or deregulated behaviours. The member can imagine that that is a very difficult decision for the department, because we are essentially placing that child on their own with around-the-clock adult carers. It is a very poor outcome for those children. To answer the member's question, the practice manual has contemplated this for some time, and, as far as I am aware, I inherited that. It has been department practice under this government, the previous government and those before it.

[9.30 am]

**Ms L. METTAM:** What assurance can the minister provide that children who are in the CEO's care are no longer living or residing with individuals who —

**The CHAIR:** I think the minister has already answered that question on the practices it has adopted moving forward, member. I think she has already answered that question.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I thought it was reportable offences.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I have a number of times; that is, as a result of the investigation recently into the case of Macie and Lee undertaken by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the department now has a changed policy that it will not knowingly place a child who is a reportable sexual offender in a residential group home with other children.

**Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI:** I refer to the significant issues impacting the agency, and specifically item 10.3 on page 517. This is something that is particularly close to my heart, as the minister knows. Can the minister explain more about how the expansion of the Home Stretch program will offer young people transitioning from out-of-home-care enhanced access to the supports and services they need to succeed in adult life?

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member. I would be happy to talk about that. I know this matters to the member because she grew up with a foster sibling, and still has a foster sibling.

**Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI:** I do.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** So she understands the importance of supporting a young person to not just the age of 18—that is obviously very important—but, in fact, as their lives go on. The Home Stretch terminology has come about from a national campaign that was put in place, led, by and large, by Anglicare and a number of community sector organisations and advocates. At the moment, the child protection system, under which young people are given formal support—that is, foster care support and the full wraparound supports—technically cease after the age of 18. Under the Children and Community Services Act, there is provision for some supports to continue—some access to counselling or some services—but not the full foster care payments, for example, and only if a young person asks for them. The Home Stretch campaign has been running in recognition that young people at the age of 18 often need more supports for a longer period. In the last period of government, as minister, through the Department of Communities, I supported a trial of the Home Stretch supports through a \$440 000 investment by the Department of Communities. That trial has been run through the district of Fremantle. Anglicare has been managing that work, and a number of young people have been coming in. It actually had some Lotterywest support as well to try to expand the number of young people supported. I think supports were offered to 22 young people, although some of them have either aged out of that arrangement or opted not to enter into the trial. We expect to receive a full assessment or report of that trial later in the year.

In the last election, the McGowan government made a commitment that it would fully support the Home Stretch campaign and offer supports to young people from the age of 18 to 21. The government has funded that in the recently announced budget—\$37.2 million to permanently establish the program to support young people who exit the child protection system at 18 years of age, until they turn 21. The expansion is expected to support around 200 young people, knowing, of course, that some young people will not take up the offer, but it will be available to them to the age of 21. At 18, they might not take it up, but they might decide at 19 or 20 that they want to avail themselves of some of those supports. Knowing that we do not have the final report on the Home Stretch trial or the full evaluation of that trial, the department is now doing some work to properly design what that program will look like and how we can start to allocate that support as quickly as possible.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” on page 520 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. I am looking at the proportion of children in the CEO’s care with comprehensive care planning undertaken within the set time frames, which we can see continues to slide from 84 per cent in 2019–20 to 76 per cent in the estimated actual for 2020–21. What will happen when these targets are not met?

**The CHAIR:** That is two-thirds of the way down, minister.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you. I understand the concern around failing to meet that particular target. One of the influences, obviously, in the last 18 months and through the last financial year has been the impact of COVID. First of all, staff were pulled to support children in care in other ways, so it caused a lot of disruptions, particularly last year when a lot of contact visits were suspended. There was a lot of concern by carers about how to manage young people in care if some of them were held back from school and the like, so that caused a lot of challenges. There has also been a number of vacancies within the department. The labour force pressures we are seeing around the state with low unemployment and an inability to recruit staff from overseas, which has traditionally been a source of skilled workforce for the department, have hit the Department of Communities in the child protection area. Added to this, the complexity of children in care, and simply the challenges of convening care planning and engaging with other significant parties, I think, are the reasons we have seen a reduction in meeting some of those targets. But it is something the department is very focused on and it is not something we expect to see carry over into this financial year.

**Ms L. METTAM:** My question was: what happens when these targets are not met?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The targets are reviewed annually to make sure that they are informed by the average results in the previous three years and whether any new programs that have come into line mean that the targets should be increased or adjusted in any way. The performance informs the budget planning for future priorities and practices. I think I gave an explanation, member, about the particular circumstances that we have seen over the last financial year due to COVID and the impact that has had on care arrangements for individual foster families managing children and also whole care teams. I think we understand that these are unusual times. As I said, at a departmental level, that is taken into account in setting new targets and in budget planning for future priorities and practices.

[9.40 am]

**Ms L. METTAM:** In 2020–21, how many children made up that target—that 24 per cent estimated actual?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will see whether I have that information with me. No, I do not have the actual numbers here; I am sorry. Perhaps the member can place that on notice if she is really that interested.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

The number of children without care plans, again, is a matter that the shadow minister asks about regularly to keep track of the number of young people with care plans to make sure that they are done in a timely manner. I know that that has been a matter of public record for some time.

**The CHAIR:** Further question, member?

**Ms L. METTAM:** A question for the chair: does it have to be a question on notice or can it be provided as a supplementary question?

**The CHAIR:** It could be a question on notice. Another way of putting it, of course, would be, “What is the total number?” and then the member, presumably, could subtract the 24 per cent from that.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I just wonder, understanding what this means historically, what this will tell us in the context of COVID, and the particular dynamics of 2020 and 2020–21 and trying to live under COVID in its various forms and under its impacts as they changed over that financial year. I am not sure, because of the particular circumstances of this year, that knowing the number of actual children who did not have their care plans met within a certain time frame will tell us about the next financial year. For instance, there were some lockdowns and a lot of uncertainty. The sorts of public discussions that we are having now in September 2021 are quite different from those that we were having in May, June or July 2020, when people really were unsure about what the transmission of COVID meant for them, and the department was needing to be very agile in its response, particularly that not only of staff but of carers who were concerned about contact visits and what that would mean and how they had to be adjusted because of the particular circumstances of COVID.

**The CHAIR:** In short, minister, you are not prepared to respond by way of a supplementary?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I just do not know what it will tell us.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can the minister provide it as supplementary information?

**The CHAIR:** I think the minister has indicated that she is not prepared to do so.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is not my preference to do that because I am just not sure what it would tell us, member. What is it that the member is hoping to elicit that those figures do not already tell her?

**Ms L. METTAM:** My original question about what happens when these targets are not met has not been answered. I appreciate the minister has explained the challenges with COVID.

**The CHAIR:** That is a further question.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am trying to get an indication of the number of children that we are talking about. It is pretty basic.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am not sure whether the question before was about what happens when the targets are not met at a departmental level. I talked about what response the department makes when targets are not being met—that is, to understand what it needs to do in its budget bids and program delivery in the future years to respond to targets that are not being met in respect of care plans. I think that that can be managed at a district level in terms of whether it is an individual care team performance or whether it is a phenomenon across the district that needs to be accommodated by extra resources to that particular district. But we do not have the actual numbers here. Sometimes it can take some time to pull those figures together, so if that question could be put on notice, we would appreciate it.

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** I refer to page 516, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, paragraph 7. How do the commitments listed in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.9 help to prevent and support those people who are experiencing, or may be at risk of, violence?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We are doing a range of things in the budget to respond to domestic violence; we did the same in the last term as well and we are building on that body of work. Members will have heard me say before that that is because there is a lot of work to do. Very little whole-of-government focus on this issue took place during the years of the former Liberal–National government. I am proud of the focus and extra resources that we have brought to address domestic violence.

As part of this 2021–22 budget, we will deliver \$45.5 million to boost domestic violence services. That includes a range of initiatives across portfolios, not just in mine directly. For instance, under the Attorney General’s portfolio, we will expand the shuttle conferencing pilot to support victims in Bunbury, Broome and Armadale. That will make obtaining restraining orders easier and less traumatic for victims. A skilled mediator, a magistrate, will be given an opportunity to sit separately from the applicant and respondent to see whether the terms of a restraining order can be agreed upon. That will be voluntary on the part of the applicant; if they do not want to do that, they do not have to. But there will be an opportunity, as demonstrated in other practices, to increase compliance because people will understand the terms of the restraining order. That will be expanded to some regional areas. We will establish a Broome Aboriginal-led specialist family violence court based on a similar court in Geraldton. We are committing \$5.6 million to that. That is another

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

matter under the Attorney General's portfolio. We think that that, hopefully, will give us better outcomes in respect of high levels of domestic violence experienced particularly by women and children in Aboriginal communities.

Importantly, there will be \$4 million for young people experiencing domestic violence—counselling targeted at teenagers. Again, this is an area in which we need to do quite a bit of work to support children and young people who experience domestic violence. This program will be focused on teenagers.

We are expanding the Safe at Home program—\$3.4 million. We are also going to bolster primary prevention in Western Australia. One of the things that we did in the last period of government was to sign on to Our Watch, which is a national prevention body. We had not signed on to it under the previous government; now all governments and the federal government have signed on to Our Watch. We understand that in Western Australia we need particular focus in some of our Aboriginal communities and perhaps some of our regional areas.

[9.50 am]

We will invest \$3.4 million to do some primary prevention work in Western Australia. We have allocated \$2.3 million to expand the Respectful Relationships program in schools, which has already been very successful so it will be good to expand it. We will also provide two additional one-stop domestic violence hubs. There is now one in Kalgoorlie and one in the member's electorate of Mirrabooka. We have allocated \$1.1 million to establish two more now that we have been able to see how the other two have been running. There will be one in a regional area and one in the metropolitan area. Another significant investment will be training 3 000 first responders to better recognise and respond to domestic violence. We did that with perinatal services in the public health system under the previous government, which involves a screening, if you like, of women before or after they have had their baby in which they are quizzed about whether they are experiencing domestic violence. We know that some victims are more likely to disclose that relationship. Shockingly, women are more likely to be exposed to domestic violence when they are pregnant or just after they have had a baby. We are going to expand that awareness and capacity to 3 000 more first responders as a result of the last budget. There is a lot to talk about in the area of what we are doing to address domestic violence. There is our financial commitment, but also our focus across a range of portfolios demonstrates our commitment.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 513 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, which details the total appropriations for the Department of Communities. During the reporting period, how much was spent on investigating the unknown whereabouts of children in the care of the CEO?

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I am just wondering whether that is the total appropriations for all Communities, and you are just dealing with services 1 to 6.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is one of the considerations, chair. I understand the question; I am just speaking to my advisers about whether we have any specific budget or financial allocation that deals with young people who are in unendorsed placements, and I am not aware that we do.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 514 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the expansion of the Home Stretch program.

**The CHAIR:** This is the matter that the member for Kingsley asked about.

**Ms L. METTAM:** That is right. Can the minister clarify how many and which organisations will receive these funds?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That has not been determined yet. I do not know whether the member was listening when I answered the question before, but we are expecting the evaluation of the Home Stretch trial to be finalised towards the end of the year. That has caused us some tension, because we invested in the trial. The feedback from Anglicare, which assisted us with the trial; Yorganop, another community sector organisation, which is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation; and some young people I have met who have helped to inform the trial, have been very enthusiastic about that work, so I do not want to disregard the trial for which there was significant investment, particularly by those people, but also financial investment. But having said that, we now have a budget allocation and I am keen to spend that budget allocation and make sure that we get supports out as quickly as possible. But to answer the question, we have yet to determine the program, and that means that we do not know which organisations will be assisting us to do that work and how many of them there will be.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The department is currently designing a system that is based on a pilot that has yet to be evaluated. Can the minister explain how that is going to work? I am presuming, as the minister said, that the department wants to take into consideration the outcomes of that review. When will the planning be finalised so that the department can spend that budget allocation?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The department is currently working to determine how we can ensure that we understand the lessons that have been learnt. As I said, the evaluation of the current pilot is expected towards the end of the year and will inform the program for which we now have a budget allocation. We are yet to determine whether there will be some sort of interim arrangement, for instance, in which some payments are provided to young people after the age of 18 while we get the full program design finalised.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Will Anglicare WA and the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation that have been part of the pilot be provided the interim funding, and how will the department structure something like that?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** They will certainly be consulted, but it has yet to be determined that they will be the recipients or some of the organisations that will be charged with delivering the program in the long term. That has not been decided yet.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The minister mentioned interim funding, potentially, if the department is not ready to roll out the funding to the final organisations that will provide the program. Does the minister expect that Anglicare and— I missed the name of the —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yorganop.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** — Yorganop will be well placed to take on the interim funding while that is finalised, or will the department undertake it? I am trying to understand where those resources will go so that there is continuation for anybody who is in the system being supported at the moment.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** None of those matters have been determined. I want to make it clear that we want to understand the evaluation of the pilot and for that to inform what Home Stretch will look like in Western Australia in the full program delivery. We also have a budget allocation now to provide supports, and there are young people who need supports now. That is the balance that we are trying to strike in seeing whether we can get any of those supports out as quickly as possible and in what form, but none of that has been determined yet.

**Mr H.T. JONES:** I refer to page 516 and paragraph 6.1, which refers to increasing the capacity of Common Ground facilities. Can the minister explain how support services such as Common Ground will help adults who are sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness?

[10.00 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Common Ground has been enthusiastically welcomed by not only specialist services that work to support homeless people, but also the community. People understand that if we provide appropriate accommodation for people who were previously sleeping rough and wraparound supports, preferably onsite if at all possible, we give those people the best chance of being able to stay stable in their accommodation for a longer period. The Common Ground model was developed in New York more than 20 years ago and it has been adopted internationally. Australia has a number of Common Ground facilities. Other states have them, but Western Australia does not have them. I am not aware whether Tasmania has them, but I know that Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide all have Common Ground facilities. However, Western Australia does not have them. When we did our 10-year strategy to address homelessness, which was based on the evidence of how to best support people who were previously homeless, it made sense to establish and fund a Common Ground facility in Western Australia. It was informed by evidence and it was the approach that we took in the strategy. These facilities are essentially residential apartment complexes. They are purpose-built to make sure that they are best placed to meet the needs of people who were previously homeless. Importantly, only half the number of the apartments will be allocated to people who were previously homeless. The other half will be used for social housing, so that we do not have a concentration of too many people with high needs in one place. We have made an announcement that we will establish two facilities. One will be in East Perth and one will be in Mandurah. Combined, they will deliver more than 160 new units for people in need of accommodation. They will also add to the stock of public housing. As I said, the typical mix of residents in Common Ground complexes is 50 per cent each of people who have experienced homelessness and people on low incomes. It is also worth noting that out of the \$73.5 million in funding for the Perth city Common Ground facility, \$8 million has been contributed by the federal government as part of the Perth City Deal. Both facilities will be within easy access of a range of services, including public transport. The sites were carefully chosen and based on not only the location of people experiencing homelessness, but also their proximity to other services. We now have the locations and full budgets for both of those sites. The City of Perth, the City of Mandurah and their local communities were closely consulted during the establishment—the planning and design phases—of those sites, and they are enthusiastic about the establishment of the facilities.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I have found a line item that applies to my previous question. I refer to page 525 in budget paper No 2, volume 2, which details the appropriations for child protection assessments and investigations.

**The CHAIR:** What exactly is the member referring to?

**Ms L. METTAM:** The line item for the “Total Cost of Service”. I will ask that question again: how does the minister account for the funds that have been spent investigating the unknown whereabouts of children in the care of the CEO?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Member, my answer to that question has not changed. I am not aware that there is a specific allocation given or known in the department. Very few young people are not in endorsed placements where their whereabouts are unknown—very few. Young people can be in either unendorsed placements or have absconded



Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

from their placement, but the whereabouts of the vast majority of them is known or they are in regular contact with their caseworkers. My answers to a number of these questions from the upper house are on the public record.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What is the procedure for investigating the unknown whereabouts of children in the care of the CEO?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Was the member's question: what are the procedures in place for investigating when a child is not in an endorsed placement and whose whereabouts is unknown?

**Ms L. METTAM:** That is right, when the whereabouts is unknown for children in the care of the CEO.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It has just been pointed out to me that the line item that the member has referred to is about the referral to child protection assessments and investigations, which are investigations into child abuse and/or neglect. They are not investigations into unendorsed placements or when a child's whereabouts is unknown. They are different matters. I do not know whether the member is aware of that.

**Ms L. METTAM:** When a child under the CEO's care goes missing, is that not a matter of neglect?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The terminology used for child assessments and investigations in the department's practice manual, and perhaps even within the act, have a certain meaning. The investigation that would take place to determine whether a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, for instance, is a child safety investigation. The department works very hard to ensure that children are kept safe and connected within their families whenever possible. When they are not able to stay with their family, they are placed in a variety of different care options depending on their needs and best interests. In a small number of cases, children in care choose to leave their placements and will choose themselves where they want to live. When a person has chosen to live with people or a family in an arrangement that has not been endorsed by the Department of Communities, and has been located by the caseworker, an assessment is arranged as a matter of priority. It is certainly the case that the department works very hard to keep track of those children and to assess what sort of arrangement those children are in, whether they are safe and what action needs to be taken to keep them safe and minimise risk.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Have the children whose whereabouts were unknown for 40 days, which was revealed in the Legislative Council last week, been found?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Can the member please give me a bit more detail?

**Ms L. METTAM:** My understanding is that last week in the Legislative Council it was revealed that the department had no idea where two young people were despite being in the care of the CEO. As at 31 August, the whereabouts of one child had been unknown for 40 days and for the other child it was 83 days. Have they been found, and how regularly is the minister briefed on this matter?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The question without notice that the member referred to was asked at a particular point in time. I do not have any update in front of me on the whereabouts of those two young people. As outlined in the answer to that question without notice in the Legislative Council, police have been notified of those young people and the department is working with police to make their inquiries. I am sorry, but I do not have an update as of today on those two young people.

[10.10 am]

**The CHAIR:** Can I just clarify, minister: do I need to write down anything specific to take on notice?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No.

**The CHAIR:** We are good; okay.

**Ms L. METTAM:** How regularly is the minister being briefed on their location?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I get regular updates on the location of those two young people, and in respect of police investigations.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to "Outcome: Families and individuals experiencing FDV" et cetera under "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators" on page 520. Under that heading, it has "Percentage of homelessness clients with some or all goals achieved at the completion of a homelessness service support period". It is also captured on page 519 at the fourth item under the service summary, "Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence". In relation to the \$54 million allocated this year —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member will have to back up. The member referred to page 520 in respect of "homelessness clients with some or all goals achieved at the completion" —

**The CHAIR:** I think it is in the top quarter there; the second black —

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, I have that line item. The member then referred to FDV; they are different matters—that is, if I understood her correctly. The first outcome the member referred to was “Percentage of homelessness clients with some or all goals achieved at the completion of a homelessness service support period”. Did I understand the member correctly?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes; but can we just refer to page 519? My apologies.

**The CHAIR:** Are we on page 519, member for Vasse?

**Ms L. METTAM:** At item 4 on page 519, “Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence”, there is an allocation of \$54 million this financial year. A recent article in *The Sunday Times* stated there had been a surge in first-time homeless women fleeing domestic violence. Can organisations such as the organisation featured in that article access any of those funds in the \$54 million allocation to support individuals who are fleeing family and domestic violence situations?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The allocation of over \$54 million in funding will all be directed at people experiencing domestic violence or who are at risk of domestic violence—along the continuum. It might be in some preventive work. It might be in some of the court procedures that I spoke about before, although much of that will be contemplated in the justice budget. I referred to some of these issues in answer to the member for Kingsley, who asked about the domestic violence commitments during the last election campaign. For instance, that will include the establishment of two new hubs, one in a regional area and one in the metropolitan area, and increased money to keep women safe at home. The proposal relates to women who are experiencing domestic violence in the home. After a risk assessment is done, they are able to stay in their residence and the perpetrator is asked to move out, but some services work with the perpetrator. I could outline many items about what we are doing.

The vast majority of that money will go to community service organisations to assist them to work with people experiencing, or at risk of, domestic violence. One of our election commitments, which is being funded, is \$4.3 million over four years to deliver what we are calling the Safe Home, Safe Family rapid rehousing initiative. This has two components: \$2.15 million to rapidly rehouse women and children into safe and affordable housing after leaving a refuge; and the same amount to support Aboriginal women moving into safe and affordable housing after leaving a refuge. This is intended to quickly help women and children who are experiencing domestic violence move into safe and affordable transition homes for a period of 12 months, with quite intensive supports. The initiatives are expected to support up to 40 women and their children each year and ensure they have safe and affordable housing as they rebuild their lives. It is expected there will be an evaluation of this program to determine the suitability, effectiveness and cultural appropriateness of the two initiatives. That is one example. As I said before, out of that \$54.675 million, well over \$50 million of it will go to community sector organisations, which deliver the vast majority of our domestic violence support services.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Out of the \$54 million and out of the programs the minister touched on, organisations such as the one featured in that article should be able to access funding to address the issues that they have with not being able to answer the phone and support that huge surge in the number of people fleeing family and domestic violence situations in the Midland area.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I do not have that article in front of me. The member is talking in quite broad terms. I do not know whether the member can tell me the name of the particular service she is referring to.

**Ms L. METTAM:** It was the Indigo Junction service in Midland. The article referred to the fact that there were 6 000 unanswered calls for assistance over the last 12 months, and that it does not even have the facilities to answer the phone. I want to clarify whether Indigo Junction will be able to access some of the programs to address that issue.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Indigo Junction is not an FDV service; it usually supports people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, as far as I am aware. We are spending quite a lot of new money in addition to the \$108 million we spend every year on homelessness services. In addition to those amounts, a massive social housing investment has been made by this government and was highlighted in the last budget. That will be backed up in service supports through additional funds in either Housing First FDV or other specific programs, both in domestic violence and homelessness supports. We understand there are pressures out there. They are not new. There were certainly pressures throughout the systems that have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are doing our best to meet those needs both in terms of building new accommodation, either accommodation for people who are homeless, such as the Common Grounds, or new social housing. Just on that point, there has been a massive increase in housing approvals. It is expected that some of the new private rental accommodation, private houses, that are coming online will in turn relieve the pressure across the board. We are spending a significant amount of money in homeless services and family and domestic violence services. If Indigo Junction is on Tenders WA and the tenders for any of that new work come up, it will be able to apply. I am advised that at the moment it receives about \$2 million per annum for some of our homeless services.

---

[10.20 am]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to access to regional childcare under “Election Commitments” on page 534 of budget paper No 2. Can the minister provide greater detail on this program, which starts off with \$383 000 this year and culminates in around \$4.8 million? Where is this to be allocated? Is it in a model similar to the Regional Early Education and Development program, which is supported in a line item a little further down? I see that it is coming to an end. Will that continue? What is this allocation about?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The government supported the REED program. Some of the early work on that was done under the previous government but the vast majority was done in the previous period of the McGowan government and it has been a very successful program. What is particularly heartening about REED is that it is designed to be a self-sustaining program. Over 20 individual smaller childcare centres now operate under the umbrella of REED, which does some of the extensive regulatory oversight that is required under early childhood education. That is a good model. That will certainly be one of the models we are looking at, but it will not be the only model.

Out of the money to which the member referred, \$1 million will go to local governments in regional areas to fund retention and attraction packages for childcare workers. An amount of \$250 000 per annum will be available to local governments in regional areas, and \$4.1 million is funding to identify key regions and assist in the establishment of sustainable models in regional childcare. The REED model might be one of those models. However, in the Pilbara—in South Hedland, for instance—there has been a lot of discussion about the lack of availability of childcare places and REED would not work there. It is a different issue from that of smaller geographical locations not being able to sustain large centres. The government has an open mind about what that support will look like in various locations and the work is just beginning to look at the need in regional Western Australia and what sorts of models we could put in place to support them. As I identified, the breakdown is that \$1 million of that funding over four years will be allocated to local governments to attract and retain workers, and \$4.1 million will be allocated to look at various models for the rest of regional Western Australia.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The allocation is made under the heading “Election Commitments”. Have individual commitments been made to communities to spend some money in those communities, or is this something that is available regardless of a particular promise in a particular seat?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No, not as part of this funding. As part of this \$4.1 million allocation for the regional work that will be done and the \$1 million for local governments, no specific recipients of that have been allocated yet. Some consultation has been done already that the member might be interested in. A webinar was held on 8 September by the Department of Communities in collaboration with the Western Australian Local Government Association for regional local government authorities to go through the workforce issues in the regions and possible solutions and to support the development of the grants program. The scoping exercise to do this work is expected to be undertaken in January next year. To answer the question, no specific programs in regional locations have been made under this line item. There might be some local commitments, or small election commitments, that have been made separate to this that are not under this line item.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** This question is also on the election commitments on page 534. There are quite a few in here that I will run through, but they are separate questions.

**The CHAIR:** Is that okay, minister?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is, so long as I am clear on what they are.

**The CHAIR:** The minister is asking you to break it down, member.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I do not intend to ask them at all once. There is an allocation for the northern suburbs men’s shed, and there is another men’s shed in Baldivis. Is there a plan to fund men’s sheds on an ongoing basis? What does that \$1 million provide? It seems a lot of money for a men’s shed. Is it a men’s shed that is being built or is it funding for the establishment of work to be done? Can the minister explain how \$1 million has been arrived at? Is there a commitment to men’s sheds generally or just on election promises?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will answer the second part of the question first. About two-thirds of the way down the page under “Community Services”, an amount of \$113 000 was allocated last year to men’s shed sector support to make sure the peak organisation had some funding.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** That was the year before last I think.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It will be given ongoing money.

Sorry, it has just been pointed out to me that that is now under controlled grants and subsidies. I thought it was given ongoing money; however, that amount is now being funded on an ongoing basis. It will increase slightly over the years, but in 2021–22, \$154 000 is allocated for the peak body. That answers the question about overall money for Men’s Sheds of WA. That has now been funded over the forward estimates.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B — Tuesday, 21 September 2021]

p88c-115a

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Where will I find that?

[10.30 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will ask Matthew Richardson to answer that particular question because the men's sheds are getting ongoing funding. Mr Richardson can probably best answer how it has been set out in the budget papers.

**Mr M. Richardson:** Funding for the men's sheds appears as the actual for 2019–20 because it used to be a grant. There is a different funding arrangement with the service provider. Since 2019–20, we have changed it from a general grant payment to a contracted service that will guaranty the men's sheds at least five years of funding. It is reviewed on an ongoing basis. It no longer appears within the controlled grants and subsidies table because it is no longer a grant. Although not separately identifiable, it will feature throughout the "supplies and services" expense in the statement of cashflows or the income sheet. It will be seen under expenses generally.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to place on the record, if this helps, that in 2020–21, men's shed support will be \$151 000; in 2021–22, it will be \$154 000; and in 2022–23, it will be \$158 000.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Could I ask the minister to provide that information as supplementary information so we have it all written down?

**The CHAIR:** Do you want to take that on notice?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am asking for supplementary information.

**The CHAIR:** What are you asking for specifically?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am asking for the amounts to be funded on an ongoing basis for the support of men's sheds and to whom that is flowing.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to give that information. We will outline the amounts being provided to Men's Sheds of WA, which is the peak body, over the forward estimates.

**The CHAIR:** Is that okay, member for Moore?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Does the minister agree to provide the supplementary information; and, if so, state exactly what information will be provided?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to provide details of the amounts being awarded to Men's Sheds of WA for the years 2020–21 to 2024–25.

[*Supplementary Information No B1.*]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member was also asking about the Northern Suburbs Men's Shed, which was provided with \$1 million.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** And Baldivis.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is a one-off amount that was a 2021 election commitment. A total of \$1 million was approved through the budget to contribute towards the development of the Northern Suburbs Men's Shed. This will be for the construction and commissioning of a new sustainable and fit-for-purpose facility to provide a welcoming, safe and accessible service to all and provide long-term welfare and financial benefits to the members of the City of Wanneroo and the state.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have further questions on these election promises.

**The CHAIR:** Are they supplementary to this question, member for Moore?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, I think so. It is to do with the election promises. I will treat it as such.

I wanted to ask about the Respectful Relationships expansion. It has been allocated \$68 000 this year and \$721 000, \$741 000 and \$760 000 in the forward estimates. If I look at page 535 of budget paper No 2, I see that a program already exists. Is that the same program with more money or is that a different program? Can the minister explain what the Respectful Relationships expansion will provide and what relationship it has to the existing Respectful Relationships program outlined on page 535?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I think I briefly referred to the Respectful Relationships program earlier. It supports public schools to develop an approach to primary prevention of gender-based violence. It supports teaching young people about health and positive relationships in the context of domestic violence prevention. As part of our 2017 election commitments, the McGowan government committed to identifying evidence-based Respectful Relationships programs for suitable delivery in schools. We allocated funding of \$1 million for the program to be delivered by

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

organisations with appropriate expertise. As part of our 2021 election commitments, we made a further commitment to continue the current Respectful Relationships teacher support program, which supports an average of 10 schools per annum, expand the current pilot to 12 additional schools per annum from 2022 to 2023, and also expand Respectful Relationships approaches to address the gender drivers of violence and teach young people about health and positive relationships in the context of domestic violence through local sport and recreation clubs and organisations. Existing funding is in place and then there is the election commitment, which is new.

The amounts that the member referred to on page 534, which start off at \$68 million in 2021–22 and then go to \$721 000, \$741 000 and \$760 000 over the forward estimates, are the 2021 election commitments. The amount that the member was referring to earlier is the existing funding for Respectful Relationships over the forward estimates. In 2021–22, it was \$277 000 and for the following three years, it will be \$168 000.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The program is to be expanded to sport and recreation clubs, as well as schools. How will the results of that expenditure be measured? What will be the parameters around that expenditure to ensure that it returns some value for money? How is something like that measured? What are the metrics of trying to determine whether that funding is achieving an end?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The 2017 election commitment that was rolled out in schools has been described as a pilot in its final year with a fourth cohort of teachers underway. Cohort 4 includes a large percentage of regional schools. An independent evaluation of the program is being undertaken by an external evaluator, with a report due after the completion of the existing program in June 2022.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is that report complete?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No. As I said, it will be completed in June 2022. An evaluation is being undertaken of the current work being done in schools.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Will that report be tabled in Parliament? When will we know when that report is done?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is not usually our practice to table in Parliament every evaluation of every program that we carry out, but the member is welcome to put a note in his diary and ask me about it in the middle of next year.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** So such a thing is not normally put in a report somewhere?

**The CHAIR:** Member for Moore, I think the minister has answered the question.

[10.40 am]

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 514 of budget paper No 2 and the heading “Election Commitments”. I am asking about the Rapid Rehousing pilot program, which is also referred to on page 516. The line item “Rapid Rehousing Pilot” is near the top of page 514, under “Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Initiatives”. I know there is a lot of enthusiasm for this program. Given that we know that access to safe housing is one of the biggest issues affecting the ability of women to escape family and domestic violence, I am interested to know why this pilot, which is outlined as giving women and children improved access to the private rental market, will not start until the following financial year.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is not the only initiative we have to keep women safe through both refuges and the outreach work that is currently done by specialist women’s refuge organisations, Department for Child Protection and Family Support staff and the Western Australia Police Force. There is extensive work being done in support of women experiencing violence. As an example, Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes is a program I spoke about before. A risk assessment is done by a service organisation and women are supported to stay in their houses, and the perpetrator moves out. There might be restraining orders put in place along with security, safety plans and the like. I just asked my advisers to see whether they could come up with a note, because two or three years ago it was a source of some frustration to me. The federal government had formerly funded that program and then ceased funding it. We supplemented our state support because the federal government opted out of that support, but then after a period of time reinstated its support, so there was a gap in service provision, which is very difficult for community service organisations that are employing people, then laying them off, and then trying to bring them back on. When the federal government reallocated money to that program, it was a lesser amount. As a result of that, the state government has put well over half a million dollars into the program. A lot of that was basically picking up on the federal government’s contribution after it had decided to take a break and then reinstate its support.

We have a lot of supports in place, but sadly there is a lot of work to do to make sure women are kept safe. Accommodation is part of the answer, but it is also making sure that they are linked to appropriate supports. We have put in place two hubs, and we are planning two more, to make sure that there is an alternative entry point or place where people can come forward to get advice. I do not shy away from the amount of work we have in front of us, but I am not at all apologising for the focus the government has placed on FDV. That is in stark contrast with the complete lack of attention that issue was being given when we first came into government. Very, very little was done for

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

additional services for domestic violence victims under the previous Liberal–National government. The expansion of the election commitment to which the member has referred, Safe at Home, will support an additional 150 women over the course of the forward estimates.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I was referring to the Rapid Rehousing pilot, not Safe at Home.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Sorry; I am reading from the wrong notes. Safe at Home is another name for Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes, so our expansion of that program, which we have funded in this election commitment, will support an additional 150 women.

**Ms L. METTAM:** How will the Rapid Rehousing pilot work, appreciating that it will not start until 2022–23?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There are two elements to the program, which I think I outlined before in response to another question from the member. There is \$2.157 million for the pilot for women and children leaving refuges, and the same amount for Aboriginal women leaving refuges, to support them into safe and affordable housing. There will be an allocation for them to be supported into accommodation. That also includes financial assistance to enable women and children to exit refuges and enter the private rental market. That, in turn, will free up crisis beds for more urgent needs. Part of the money is allocated so that they can be given financial assistance, as well as for caseworkers and outreach workers based in the refuges.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What is the reason for the delay in the implementation of this program? Will it take time to construct? The minister has suggested that there is a range of other programs already out there.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I have just been advised that there has been an allocation of \$113 000 for the planning and service design that will take place this financial year. Procurement will also be able to be undertaken this financial year, with the intention that it will be operational by next financial year. It just takes some time to make sure we have the program up and running. Our strong preference and general method of delivery is to consult with the sector to see what the best way is to organise the program and to make sure they have the opportunity to tender for that work.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is there any indication of how many women and children it is anticipated this program will support?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is expected that 40 women and their children a year will be supported through each of the programs, so a total of 80 women per year. One program is a general program, and there will be a program for Aboriginal women and their children, so it will be 80 women and their children across both those programs.

**Ms L. METTAM:** It will obviously be very competitive. There were cuts to Lamp Inc in Busselton; that decision was made when the McGowan government first came to office. Will anyone across the state be able to apply for that program?

[10.50 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** A comment was made at the beginning about a cut that was made earlier on by the McGowan government to a program called Lamp. I do not know what the member was talking about.

**Ms L. METTAM:** It was a program that was delivered through Lamp in Busselton to assist people with mental health challenges or a range of different challenges to access independent living.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I cannot comment on that because it is not part of my portfolio, member. I do not know that it is useful to refer to that.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is not homelessness part of the minister's portfolio?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Homelessness is part of my portfolio, but it is not a homelessness service that we have ever funded under my portfolio.

**The CHAIR:** We will stick with the budget questions.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I have a supplementary question. How will it work for the 80 people who will be able to access this program, not from next year but the year after? What will be the criteria?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member said that 80 people will be able to access the program not next year but the year after. That is not correct. They will be able to access the program in 2022, in the next financial year. The program is being designed now, which is the budget allocation that I outlined. We will consult the sector, including its peak body, to make sure we have a robust design. Tenders for that work will go out and it is expected that service delivery will take place early next financial year.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I return to the election commitments on page 534. My apologies if I ask a question that has already been asked; I came in an hour after this session had started, so it might have already been asked. Is a breakdown available of the small commitments outlined in the budget that the minister distributed in 2020–21?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is the member referring to a specific line item about election commitments?

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am referring to the line item on “Small Commitments”, which is two-thirds of the way down under “Election Commitments”. I am wondering whether the minister has a breakdown of how those commitments were distributed. I assume they have all been met.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The funding is for part of the election commitments approved by cabinet in 2020–21. Cabinet endorsed 151 community programs worth a total of \$4.63 million. The funding supported programs such as caring for communities and play and learn; support for our seniors; youth support; family and domestic violence support; minor infrastructure upgrades, inclusive of minor school works and consumables; and sport and community infrastructure. As I said, a total of 151 election commitment grants packages, inclusive of grant guidelines, were taken up by 146 not-for-profit organisations. The time frames for the completion varied between two and 24 months, with 24 months being the maximum period allowed to acquit the grants. I think I have given the member an outline of the programs that were contemplated in the line item that the member referred to, with funding of \$4.63 million for small election commitments under the Department of Communities’ responsibility.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is the \$4 million all in the minister’s area or is it spread across other areas?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is spread across multiple portfolios; it is spread across other portfolios within the Department of Communities.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The minister can understand that this did not go through the budget process of the previous year, so no outline was available to us earlier of where this expenditure went. Of those provided, is it possible to get a list of where those projects were and what they were?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to give the member a list of those under my portfolio.

**The CHAIR:** Does the minister agree to provide that as supplementary information; and, if so, can she state exactly what information will be provided?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am told that there are 117 under my area of responsibility. I am happy to list them now; it will probably help fill out some of the time. Does the member want me to do that?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I think it would be more time productive to provide it as supplementary information.

**The CHAIR:** Does the minister agree to provide the supplementary information; and, if so, can she state exactly what information will be provided?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I agree to provide supplementary information in relation to page 534 and the budget allocation under the line item “Small Commitments” on the small commitments that have been awarded under my portfolio responsibilities.

*[Supplementary Information No B2.]*

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to pages 520 and 521 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the explanation of significant movements. I refer to the percentage of departmental clients who were assessed and received a response as a result of family and domestic violence incidents and did not require an FDV-related response within 12 months.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Sorry, I am having trouble finding the place the member is talking about. Is it page 521?

**Ms L. METTAM:** It is pages 520 and 521. It is probably easiest to refer to note 2 on page 521.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is the member referring to the line item on the percentage of department clients who were assessed and received a response as a result of a FDV incident and did not require another FDV-related response within 12 months?

**Ms L. METTAM:** That is correct.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** What is the member’s question?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I want to know the actual case numbers; we do not need to know the percentages. What is the number of people we are talking about here?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will answer the member’s question. If the member goes to page 524, she will see some metrics about how we are preventing, and responding to, domestic violence. The number of cases is referred to in note (b) in the middle of that page. I am advised that these are people who are experiencing domestic violence, but it might also include financial counselling, subsidised driving lessons or other supports that are given. We can get some idea in note (b) of the numbers contemplated in the budget. It is not an exact comparison, but that is the number of people on which we base our assumptions in terms of the services provided by the department. It is not an exact comparison, because some of the services on page 524 might be a little broader than some of the ones on pages 520 and 521.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

[11.00 am]

**Ms L. METTAM:** This figure, obviously, has dropped significantly from the target figure. The target figure for this coming financial year is more than 77 per cent, or the figure that was achieved in 2019–20. How can the minister account for such a turnaround?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member said that the number has dropped significantly, but I think she is taking a little licence there. She will be familiar, hopefully, that through all departments the budget papers set targets for various metrics within a department's responsibilities. Those targets are based on a number of different factors. Sometimes the ability to reach those targets is also influenced by a number of factors outside our control. I suspect that in the case of this financial year, there have been a number of important global events that have been well outside our control. But I will refer specifically to the line item that the member talked about. The estimated actual in 2020–21 is lower than the 2019–20 actual and the 2020–21 budget target. This result reflects the complex and repetitive nature of domestic violence in many families that has been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is what I was just referring to. The department will continue to assess and refine its family and domestic violence responses to ensure that they are effective and sustainable and, accordingly, will continue to set aspirational targets to aim for better than the 2020–21 estimated actual results.

**The CHAIR:** This is timely; minister, would you like a comfort break of 10 minutes?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Sure.

**The CHAIR:** We will break until 11.10 am.

*Meeting suspended from 11.02 to 11.12 am*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to page 514 of budget paper No 2, and to page 534, "Election Commitments", specifically "Grandcarers Support Scheme". What is the total amount of funding provided to Wanslea to deliver the scheme in 2020–21, as well as each year across the forward estimates?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member is asking how much is paid to Wanslea.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Over what years—for 2020–21?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** For 2021–22. Sorry; I might have said 2020–21.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I cannot remember. Wanslea will receive \$1 050 000 in 2021–22 and the same amount has been allocated each year over the forward estimates.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** What is the total number of grants administered as part of the scheme up to date and does the department have a forecasted amount for next year?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is it the total amount for the scheme?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The total number of grants.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** For grandcarers?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** In 2020–21, the McGowan government provided a total of \$1.49 million to grandcarers for the care of 2 157 grandchildren. This comprised \$711 400 in normal payments to grandcarers, as well as the extraordinary amount of \$783 600 for the additional WA recovery plan payments to assist grandcarers with the ongoing costs of keeping children safe during COVID. I think I have probably answered only part of the question. That was in 2020–21. The member wants to know the forward estimates.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, as much as the department can make a prediction.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Member, it will not be possible to give the exact amount in the forward estimates because it will depend on how many grandcarers we are expected to support; the numbers may change. If there is an increased number of grandcarers, we will increase our supports.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** There are successful and non-successful applicants in a program like this. Does the minister have any idea how many actual applications there were for support and how many of those were unsuccessful?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** People have to meet the criteria to be eligible for grandcarers support and if they meet that criteria, all applicants are successful.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, but the minister does not know how many applied in total.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No, I do not have that figure. They may have applied for the funding, but if they are not eligible —



Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** So the department does not keep a record of the applications as such.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Not that I am aware of.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Are any other pools of funding provided for grandcarers who do not meet the eligibility criteria for that particular scheme; in other words, does the department provide any other supports?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The nature of grandcarers is that it is an informal arrangement that is in place for grandcarers—grandparents or other extended family members who support children outside the child protection system. We provide assistance to Wanslea, which also runs group supports for grandcarers. I am not sure whether a person needs to be an approved grandcarer and eligible for the annual funding in order to go to the support groups that Wanslea runs and to be eligible for the other support services. Most grandcarers who apply for support will be given support. If they have children in their care and they are not in the formal child protection system, I would think that they would be eligible for the supports that we are talking about. Perhaps the member can outline the people who might consider themselves grandcarers whom we would not consider grandcarers. I am not quite sure whom the member is talking about.

[11.20 am]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am aware that a number of people claim that they have not met the eligibility criteria but consider themselves to be grandcarers. I do not know the number or the particular circumstances for each of them, but there certainly are people who are not eligible and feel that they should be.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am surprised to hear that, member. I would be very happy for the member to take that up separately with me and write to me or send me the details. Some grandcarers would prefer to be paid full foster care payments, in the same way that kinship carers are paid for those children who are formally in the care of the CEO of the department but their foster care arrangement is with a relative. They are paid full foster care supports and given full supports under the department. Sometimes people refer to that as not receiving the full supports. Under our new policy, grandcarers will receive \$1 000 per year for each child in care and be eligible for other supports through Wanslea. For the member's information, the criteria on the Wanslea website state —

To be eligible for the Grandcarers Support Scheme:

**1. You must be an informal grandparent carer**

'Informal' means you're not receiving any regular financial support from the Department of Communities, for example, a carer subsidy or Special Guardianship Order payment

**2. You must be a full-time, primary carer**

To apply, your grandchildren (up to 18 years) must have resided in your full-time, primary care for at least four months

**3. You must permanently reside in WA**

You must be an Australian citizen, hold a permanent visa and be a permanent resident of Western Australia

**4. You must be a grandparent**

You must be a biological, marital, defacto or culturally defined grandparent to the children in your care

I would have thought that that was a pretty broad assessment. If the member believes that there are grandcarers who sit outside that eligibility criteria for supports, I would be interested to know about them.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 521 in budget paper No 2, volume 2. The sixth paragraph under the explanation of significant movements refers to the average and the median waiting times for accommodation.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is this about the total housing assistance?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes. Does it not come under —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am not the housing minister.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Does it not come under homelessness?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No; that is a housing question.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to the table on page 534. Under community services, an amount of money was allocated in 2020–21 for "Disaster Recovery Arrangements—Severe Tropical Cyclone Seroja". I also refer to Wooroloo fire recovery at the bottom of that same section of the table and the allocation of \$164 000 for this year. Looking at these figures, I wonder why there was no expenditure in the year just past for the Wooroloo fire, which happened at the start of this year, and, conversely, why there is to be no further expenditure in this program for the area affected by cyclone Seroja. I want an explanation of those figures and their application on the ground.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is the member asking why there are no ongoing allocations for either of those figures?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The question is in two parts, I suppose. In the case of the Wooroloo bushfire, the expenditure seems to have happened only in this current year, even though the fire was a considerable time ago now. For cyclone Seroja, which happened after the bushfire, there was \$2 million expenditure but there is nothing in the forward estimates. I am asking about the timing of those payments and what they represent in terms of service.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is important to know what the role of the Department of Communities is in response to those disasters. Obviously, we are not the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. In the case of the Wooroloo bushfire, which occurred in February 2021, the department's role was to assist in the establishment of a one-stop-shop recovery centre and to continue to provide required emergency welfare services. The department also assisted with the set-up of the evacuation centres in the immediate response to the fire to provide emergency accommodation and care for affected families. The bushfire destroyed 86 properties. Assistance was provided by the Department of Communities to set up the evacuation centres, as I said, and continue to staff the bushfire recovery centre at Giddegannup. Communities provided \$202 535 in financial support to impacted people.

In the case of cyclone Seroja, which impacted 16 local governments across 130 000 kilometres, Communities deployed over 196 frontline staff and 122 Australian Red Cross staff to the affected regions. To date, a total of 4 650 outreach and welfare appointments have been undertaken and \$2.69 million of emergency financial support has been provided. I should also say that we have since had other fires and floods, but the allocations that have been made reflect the nature of Communities' response, which in an emergency is an immediate aftermath response, not an ongoing role. That role is picked up through ongoing work by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, but also perhaps the Department of Housing, the Mental Health Commission, the Department of Health et cetera. Ongoing supports are picked up in the general work of government departments or service organisations.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 524 in budget paper No 2, volume 2, and note 2, which we touched on before. The 2020–21 estimated actual for preventing and responding to family and domestic violence is \$69 million. The budget target for the following year is about \$54 million, which represents about a 20 per cent decline in funding. Can the minister explain why there is a drop in funding for this area?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Part of the explanation is outlined in note 1. Significant additional amounts were given in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by both the state and federal governments. The reduction in the 2021–22 budget target reflects the conclusion of the COVID-19 response initiatives and the finalisation of additional and expanded refuge works.

[11.30 am]

**Ms L. METTAM:** I note that additional staff were provided over that same period as well. Can the minister explain why additional staff were allocated in this area?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The increase is due to the new one-stop FDV hubs program, forming part of the 2021 election commitments. The McGowan government has approved funding to establish two additional one-stop hubs. Two are already operating—one is in Kalgoorlie and the other is in Mirrabooka. The increase in the number of FTEs responding to domestic violence is because of the operation of the hubs.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The minister has already touched on one-stop hubs in a previous question. Can the minister clarify how the decision will be made in respect of additional hubs? Who decides the location of the additional hubs and what is the decision based on?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** An allocation for two new hubs has been made for 2021–22. Project planning and development will commence, including the co-design, in each location, and building procurement. To answer the question, the information that will be taken into account will include police data in terms of the number of reported FDV assaults, child protection data, and population data, and the proximity of other services in the area.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Will the minister be able to table the advice when those decisions are made?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We have not got that advice yet, so I am reluctant to say that I will table what advice we have. If the member is not happy with the locations when they are announced, there are ample opportunities for the member, or any of her colleagues, to ask questions about how those decisions were arrived at. It is a little theoretical for me to commit to tabling advice that I have not seen or in fact advice that has not yet been written.

**Ms L. METTAM:** When will the decision be made on the locations of these additional hubs?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We have not made a decision yet. As I said, we have just received in this budget the approval of \$1.6 million to commence the planning and project management, but we have not made a decision yet. I have not received advice about where the locations will be. As soon as we receive that, we will make that known.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms L. METTAM:** When will the minister be making a decision on the locations? When will that information be known?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am expecting to make a decision this year.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to “Election Commitments” on page 534. There is \$500 000 in the budget for something called “Micro-Enterprise Support”. Could the minister give an outline of that program and why it only appears once in the budget?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Sorry, member, what is it called?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** “Micro-Enterprise Support”.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I understand that this is a disability program, so perhaps this question would be best directed at the minister responsible for disabilities.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you. We will let that one go, then.

Again on the same page, I refer to the third item, “Elder Rights WA”, under “Election Commitments”. There is an allocation of \$1 million a year, starting this year. I understand from page 517 that there is a grant going to the Legal Aid Commission for the rollout of that. Could the minister provide a breakdown of what that funding will be used for and what services will be provided to seniors under that funding? Given that this seems to be a new stream of funding, how will the minister measure success and ensure that the money is going to where it was intended or for the purposes intended?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am not the minister responsible for seniors. Perhaps the member might direct that question to the minister responsible.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Okay, thank you.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to the item “Women’s Grants” on page 535 under the heading “Women”. I note from the minister’s media statement when these grants were announced that they are part of the government’s plan for addressing gender inequality in Western Australia. When did the grants commence?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** These grants have been in place for some time. They have been an annual amount. The outline of the grant program has been in place for some time. We have adjusted it slightly to accommodate Stronger Together, which is our overall strategic direction for making inroads into the significant gender inequality we face in our state and our country. To answer the question, the grants program has been in place for some time and the program outline is available on the department’s website.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Have these grants been oversubscribed for each session; and, if so, can the minister provide the figures, since it commenced, of how much it has been oversubscribed or undersubscribed for each round?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Is the member asking whether people apply for grants but do not meet the criteria?

**Ms L. METTAM:** No. I am asking whether it has been oversubscribed for each session, meaning that people have met the criteria but there are limited funds available. I am wondering whether it is oversubscribed.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There are more applicants than we are able to fund; that is true. I do not have the figures available to me about how many applicants there would be. I venture to say that some organisations apply that would not meet the criteria, which is the reason they are not successful. There might be others. We only have a limited amount of funding so we are not able to fund every applicant that comes before us.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is the minister able to provide that information via supplementary information?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** How many organisations have applied and not been successful?

**Ms L. METTAM:** That is right.

**The CHAIR:** Does the minister agree to provide the supplementary information; and, if so, can she state exactly what information will be provided?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am prepared to table those organisations that applied for funding in 2020–21 under the women’s grants projects that were not successful.

[*Supplementary Information No B3.*]

[11.40 am]

**Ms L. METTAM:** How is the effectiveness of the grants program being assessed and how can the government be sure that the grants are contributing towards the goal of addressing gender inequality?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** They are reasonably small amounts of money. We do not want to spend too many resources evaluating each program. They are up to \$10 000 on average for each grant recipient, and often between \$5 000 and

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

\$10 000. The evaluation of the expenditure needs to be proportionate to the amount that has been allocated. A broad range of activities are successfully awarded grants within this program. They could be Aboriginal organisations, regional organisations, young people's organisations or occupation-based or industry-based organisations. I can give some examples, but the evaluation of whether the actual grant recipients fulfil their requirements under the grants takes place through an acquittal process within the department.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to the fifth note on page 522 under "Community Services". How many working with children cards were allocated over the past financial year?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We have the head of the working with children check unit here, so I might get Mr Payne to answer some of those questions, because then it will make his morning seem productive. Is it the number of applications the member is asking for?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

**Mr P. Payne:** Thank you, minister. For 2020–21, there were a total of 145 878 working with children applications. That is a 12 per cent increase over the previous year.

**Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI:** Can the minister explain to us how the Department of Communities' working with children cards are helping to keep communities safe?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to talk about this because quite a bit of work is being done in the department to improve the working with children check processes to ensure that not only do we have a quick turnaround of applicants, but also that when there are concerns or any further investigation needs to take place, that is done in a timely, but importantly, thorough, manner. That can be quite challenging when accessing different databases, perhaps even across jurisdictions, let alone across departments. As Mr Payne pointed out, as a result of that there has been a significant increase in the number of applications. That is partly too because there has been a lot of proactive work in the unit targeting industries or areas where there could be noncompliance. An example of the proactive work that has been done, and the focus being on providing decisions that best protect children in a timely manner, is that where there is a criminal record, the average time to finalise a decision is under 20 days—a decrease from 22 days in the prior year. There has also been a focus on the proactive compliance program. I will get Mr Payne to speak about that.

**Mr P. Payne:** There are two main strategies under the working with children compliance regime: one is proactive and one is reactive. The proactive looks to Gumtree advertisements, for example, and we write directly to people who advertise to make sure they have a working with children check. Obviously if they do not, we take appropriate action to respond to that. More proactively, we have been delivering an online education campaign through Facebook and Gumtree—those types of online platforms—specifically targeting high-risk areas in which people may not necessarily understand that they need to have a working with children check. That is based on a risk assessment we have done of all the different categories of people who are subject to the act. Most recently it has been those delivering tutoring services. Next year we will commence a campaign that focuses on sporting activities or volunteer-type activities. We target those who work predominantly unsupervised. That is a high-risk area compared with, perhaps, teachers in the school environment, who are obviously employed and do not fall into the category of high risk. Those activities identify people who are compliant and also people who are not compliant. Additionally, we have an ongoing system for people who are issued with negative notices to make sure they continue to not be engaged in child-related work.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I note a statement by the department on 10 September about a woman who was convicted after making false claims on a working with children check application. How many false claims have been made over the past financial year?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We are aware of one. Obviously, we can talk about only those that we are aware of. There might be false claims made. The unit is conscious of regulated areas, but, importantly, those areas that are less likely to have some oversight, as in online and advertising opportunities through Gumtree and the like, or tutoring, to make sure there is a proactive approach to these issues.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I understand that previously there were some issues with the Departments of Education, Justice and Health not complying fully with the working with children checks, and the Auditor General reported on that matter. Has the Department of Communities made some progress in ensuring that the conditions described in that report have been addressed? Is the minister satisfied that those matters are now in compliance?

[11.50 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Quite a lot of work has been done in response to the Auditor General's report that the member referred to. I have already spoken about some of that work, which includes making sure that there are quick turnarounds for applications for working with children checks, ensuring investigations are done thoroughly when

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

they need to be done, and also carrying out proactive work. I might ask Mr Payne to talk about the work that has been done to ensure that people working in other government departments, including within the Department of Communities, have met their working with children check requirements.

**Mr P. Payne:** Following the Auditor General’s 2020 report, four different government departments were identified, which are predominantly higher users of the working with children system. We have an ongoing relationship with senior officers in those departments to ensure they are in compliance with the working with children system and also with their administrative practices and procedures. Following that report, the then director general wrote to not only those departments, but to all directors general across government, to bring to their attention the requirements of the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act. Our current work includes looking at supporting better online connectivity between the working with children system and those departments in order for them to be more timely and accurately aware of their officers who are currently subject to a working with children check or when those officers are due to lodge a renewal. That system development process is currently under consideration.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 514 of budget paper No 2. I note that in the 2021–22 budget, \$110 000 was allocated to the Caring Dads program. What has this money been budgeted for?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** This is an election commitment for a specific program in the Peel region called Caring Dads. It is a program to engage men in group interventions to change behaviour, with the aim of reducing and preventing instances of family violence. As part of the 2021–22 budget, an allocation of \$110 000 has been approved for a 12-month trial of the Caring Dads program. The program is designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children by working with fathers who are alleged to have abused or neglected their children or exposed them to the abuse of their mothers. The initiative will be delivered by Stronger Families, which has advocated for the funding for the program in the Peel region, with the support of the member for Mandurah.

**Ms L. METTAM:** How many families or individual dads is this program anticipated to support?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** At this stage, an election commitment was made for the allocation of \$110 000. Now that we have secured the money in the budget, the work will be done to understand how many families the organisation will be able to work with.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Why are there no funds in the forward estimates for this program?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is a trial at this stage. That is the amount of money that was committed for the program at the last election.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to the grants and subsidies on page 538 of budget paper No 2. The first line item is “Connected Beginnings—Roebourne”. There is an amount of money for 2019–20. Nothing was allocated last year, there are allocations for this year and next year but there is nothing going forward. What does the Connected Beginnings program deliver and why was no money allocated in the previous year?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Connected Beginnings is a program that has been funded by the commonwealth government through the Department of Education, Skills and Employment. It has three objectives: to ensure that children and families in Roebourne can thrive and reach their full potential; to foster a genuine partnership with local service providers; and to support the community. To answer the member’s question, it is essentially a federal government program. We receive the funds and make sure they are delivered to the program in Roebourne.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The disjointed nature of the funding is simply down to another government. It is not because of the structure of the program that it is able to survive without money for a year. It is quite strange that there is absolutely no expenditure for a program for a year and then it is resurrected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I suggest that the member ask the federal government why it stops and starts its funding arrangements. It frustrates me as well.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am asking the minister: did the program cease to be on the ground in the last year or was it able to continue in some form? If not, what is it delivering?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Earlier, I outlined some of the points that are contemplated under Connected Beginnings. The program in Roebourne is called Yandi for Change. As I said, it is funded by the commonwealth government. It is designed to support the Roebourne community around three key objectives. We have done what we can to support that local community in a range of ways but no budget was provided by the federal government for 2020–21. We have worked with the community as best we can on that particular program.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I realise that we have already touched on the Safe at Home program. There is a reference to the program on page 514 under “Election Commitments”. I wanted some clarification on how many people currently use the Safe at Home service. It is under “Safe at Home Expansion”.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Under the expansion, the McGowan government made an election commitment to expand the Safe at Home program to support an additional 150 women, with or without children, each year who are at risk of domestic violence.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Will it support an additional 150 women from 2022–23?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Some funding was approved for 2021–22. The funding of \$3.392 million has been approved through the 2021–22 budget, which includes \$100 000 approved in 2021–22, so in the current year, to consult and engage with partners and stakeholders to review the program and see what the model might look like. I think this is the answer to the member’s question: \$100 000 has been approved for this financial year—the current financial year—to engage with partners and stakeholders. At the moment, prior to this expansion, there are six support services providing Safe at Home services throughout WA.

[12.00 noon]

**Ms L. METTAM:** Going forward, will there be additional support services providing the expanded program?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is expected that that will be the case. Although the opportunity to bid for that work will be made available to everyone, it might be that only the existing services will want to do it and will bid for it. But I would expect a geographical expansion as a result of our work, so I would be surprised if it did not include other services.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can the minister tell me what she means by “geographical expansion”? Is everyone across the state eligible for the Safe at Home program? Is geography a challenge?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I outlined earlier that there are six support services currently operating that program. I am aware, for instance, of one in Bunbury, and I assume that they deal largely with women from around that geographical area. That is not to say that someone from another region, either the metro region or somewhere else in the state, could not make contact with that service and ask to be relocated to that area; of course they could. But the nature of services is such that they tend to operate within their geographical location. When we look at the expansion, we will be looking at what the need is across the state and what the current footprint is across the state, and we will make sure that we are responding to need when we have the opportunity to expand the program.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The minister said that it will provide for an additional 150 people. How many people currently use this service on an annual basis?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I do not have that number here, I am sorry, member.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is the minister able to provide that as supplementary information?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, for the last financial year, which might make more sense.

**The CHAIR:** Can the minister state exactly what information will be provided?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will provide the number of victim survivors who were supported by Safe at Home–funded services over the year 2020–21.

[*Supplementary Information No B4.*]

**Ms L. METTAM:** Has this funding been oversubscribed? Are some people unable to access this support?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Individual services determine which clients might be best suited to access the Safe at Home program, depending primarily upon a risk assessment and the wishes of the clients. Some clients would prefer to move—to leave their residence and move, either to another home or location, or to a refuge. Others want to stay in their residence and, as I said, depending upon a risk assessment of how safe that is, the individual service will assess whether that is a suitable option for them. As far as I am aware, we do not ask those services to report with that sort of detail on whether they have had some women who might be eligible for Safe at Home, but they do not have the funding for them. But I reiterate the point that I made earlier: I wonder what advocacy the member has made to her federal counterparts on this issue, because for well over 12 months in the last term of government, the federal government simply ceased funding this program, much to my frustration, and I did some public advocacy on that. When the federal government reinstated the funding, it was at a lower amount, and the state government had to pick up the tab. I hope that, in advocating for this program, the member has expressed that to her federal counterparts.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I have been advocating to ensure that there is support in the electorate I represent, from a state government point of view.

**The CHAIR:** Member, is there a question there?

**Ms L. METTAM:** She asked me a question, so I responded.

**The CHAIR:** It is up to you to ask the questions.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I do not think I did ask a question; I just made a point.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms L. METTAM:** The minister touched on Bunbury being an area in which a support service is provided. Are women seeking support in the south west region able to access the Safe at Home support service in Bunbury?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, they are.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The funding that has been allocated to this program has not been a limiting factor in terms of the delivery of this service. To expand on the answer the minister gave before, can the minister confirm that every individual who is eligible for this service has been able to access it?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** In response to a question that the member put earlier about whether this service was oversubscribed, I said that it would be up to individual services to determine whether this service was appropriate for an individual woman and her family. As an example, it would be up to the service to decide whether it had cases that might be appropriate for that program, but they might not have been able to find accommodation or did not have money in that particular program. However, we do not ask them to report on that.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to page 538 of budget paper No 2 and the heading “Grants and Subsidies” at the top of the “Net Appropriation Determination” table. The line item “Western Australian Council of Social Service Sector Support Development” has an allocation of \$91 000 for 2019–20, \$680 000 for 2020–21 and \$192 000 for each year of the forward estimates. Can the minister explain why there is such a variation in funding through 2019–20, 2020–21 and 2021–22? Why is the estimated amount at such wide variance with the budgeted amount for 2020–21? There seems to be an allocation that has not been spent. What was the service to provide, and where is it at now?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The budget of \$680 000 in 2020–21 includes \$500 000 for financial counselling. This program is now listed separately.

[12.10 pm]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Can the minister outline what the \$192 000 is actually provided for?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The Western Australian Council of Social Service provides advice and information on emerging issues impacting disadvantaged and vulnerable people and on the current trends and issues experienced by the community services sector in Western Australia.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** There is an amount for financial counselling already in the grants and subsidies table. Last year when WACOSS was allocated \$500 000 to provide financial counselling, when the budget was \$680 000, there was already a budgeted amount of \$500 000 for financial counselling further up the table. Are they different streams of financial counselling or are they the stream of financial counselling the minister referred to? If so, is there a double up from last year?

**The CHAIR:** I think the member might be looking at the line below, “Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy”, which is \$500 000.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** No, that is \$200 000, I think; I will put a ruler on it, but I am pretty sure it is.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, sorry.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I might get Mr Richardson to explain whether this is income or expenditure, but I understand we are talking about the net appropriation determination.

**Mr M. Richardson:** It is helpful to recognise that this net appropriation determination table actually reflects the income of the Department of Communities to undertake various services. Only a subset within that is exclusive to statutory authorities. The \$500 000 listed here in the budget was expected income to Communities from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The \$500 000 the member referred to in the grants table shows the expense of that same program. It is not so much a double up as the money coming in and the money going out.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** They are both in the same table, so, presumably, they represent the same type of either grant or subsidy.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** As I understand it, the amount received from WACOSS was a one-off amount and it is now expended through grants.

**Mr H.T. JONES:** I refer to paragraph 6.2 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” in the *Budget Statements* on page 516. Can the minister outline how Boorloo Bidee Mia will ensure there is a culturally appropriate response to those who are rough sleeping in the CBD?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I can speak about this issue because we have great hopes for this organisation to provide, for the first time, homelessness support delivered by an Aboriginal-controlled organisation in the CBD area. Of course, Aboriginal-controlled organisations do important community service work across the spectrum. However, a specific tailored service has not been provided by an ACO in Perth. Although this service will be provided to not only Aboriginal people, we know that Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness in the CBD is a cohort that is poorly serviced by our current system, so we are hoping to address that through this new service.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

The member will be aware that other services now located at 100 Wellington Street will be available for people who were previously rough sleeping. It is important that it is not considered just a shelter; it is also focused on building a kind of community-based environment that supports residents to address the underlying issues that have contributed to them becoming homeless and to get them to maintain their lodging and transition to long-term accommodation. This is part of a significant addition to the resources that we have allocated to homelessness. I referred before to the over \$100 million per annum that is being spent and to the provision of the physical beds that will be provided by Boorloo Bidee Mia in a premises that was previously a backpackers' hostel. It is really well suited in not only its location, but also its construction. Its internal layout is very well suited to the clientele. As I said, having an ACO running that service will, we think, fill a gap that has been there for too long. I was very hopeful when I went to the opening of Boorloo Bidee Mia with the Minister for Housing and we saw the number of new staff who have been employed by Wungening, the Aboriginal Corporation that has been commissioned to run Boorloo Bidee Mia. The young Aboriginal staff were keen to start to work with people who were previously rough sleeping and to develop relationships with them and provide them with support.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to the “Grants and Subsidies” section on page 538 where there is a one-off allocation to the Kimberley juvenile justice strategy. It is a relatively minor amount of money. I am wondering where that strategy is being delivered or what it is because I cannot find any reference to it anywhere else in the budget papers. Is that the full amount for the strategy, will it be delivered in one year, and what does the strategy aim to achieve?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is a program classified under the youth portfolio so I ask the member, if he can, to direct that question to the Minister for Youth.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to family and domestic violence initiatives on page 535, under the heading “Prevention of FDV”. Can the minister provide a breakdown of the line items across the forward estimates?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** This is part of our \$16.53 million support package for a range of domestic violence support services in WA in response to COVID, which was announced in June 2020. Included in the list of initiatives are the following programs led by the Department of Communities. There is the expansion of mobile FDV outreach services and funding of \$8.639 million over 2020–21 and 2021–22 for at least 23 additional outreach workers across metropolitan and regional refuge intake areas to provide support to women and children who are experiencing or are at further risk of family violence. Another component is to strengthen the domestic violence response teams; there is a total of \$6.688 million over 2020–21 and 2021–22 to provide for at least 17 additional community sector team members across the state to work with victims to provide supports following a police call-out. There is also a component for FDV counselling, advocacy and support services of \$1.8 million over the two years 2020–21 and 2021–22 to meet an anticipated increase in demand and restore service levels. Finally, there is a job retraining scheme for women in refuges, with a total of \$123 000 over the two years 2020–21 and 2021–22 to fund a pilot scheme for 50 women per year in metropolitan refuges to gain employment skills and prerequisite certificates in career training.

[12.20 pm]

**Ms L. METTAM:** It will cease in 2023–24. The minister said that it is a COVID-19 response, so what assumptions have been made around why there will be no future funding under this program?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We announced at the time that these initiatives would be time limited and a response to the expected and, in fact, realised increases in domestic violence, and the uncertainty and added pressures experienced across the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were only ever expected to be time limited—that was the program and the budget allocation, and all the services that received money clearly understood that it would be a time-limited increase, particularly in staff on the ground who were placed in refuges and in joint response teams. I should say, too—the member will be aware—that as part of our election commitments in March, we announced a full suite of additional services and programs that add up, I think, to over \$60 million for this next period of government. A range of services were funded in this budget and I think that we have talked about them at other times this morning.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer again to page 538, under the heading “Grants and Subsidies”, the line item “Parenting Community Funding” and the allocation this year of \$534 000. What does that particular program provide?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The Child and Adolescent Health Service contributes annual funding of \$500 000 plus indexation to the Department of Communities for the parenting support service Ngala Parenting Line via a memorandum of understanding. The line item “Parenting Community Funding” contributes to parenting services to provide sessional or occasional early intervention and care services in regional areas, many of which have limited or no alternative childcare options. The term of the agreement was February 2017 to June 2020 with an extension option to June 2022. The extension option has now been exercised.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** To be clear, there is no further funding allocation in the forward estimate because that will be the end of the program that has been offered as an extension by the commonwealth. Is there any plan to address that with an approach to the federal government to see whether it can be extended further, or will that just peter out?



Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That will be a matter for government to determine, but perhaps it is a matter best directed to the Minister for Health.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 534, and the election commitments in the table titled “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies”. There is a commitment of \$4.063 million in the line item titled “Small Commitments”. Can the minister please provide a breakdown of what that covers?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Through the chair, I do not think the member was paying attention because I have been asked this question and agreed to provide an answer on notice for those areas within my portfolio.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to page 517—this is where it is difficult to know which minister can respond—and to paragraph 14, which states —

... the Department will focus on implementing the recommendations of the Functional Review of corporate functions that was completed in 2020–21, with a particular focus on: further integration of non-frontline service delivery ...

Can the minister provide an update on the implementation process? Is that in her area of responsibility? Is it a joint responsibility? How does it work?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will get the director general to address some of these issues, but, essentially, the functional review was an opportunity to identify efficiencies and effectiveness of non-frontline services in the new Department of Communities. A cross-agency oversight committee with an independent chair was tasked with progressing the review. As frontline services were not within the scope of the functional review, direct services in the community have not been affected. Although the objectives included financial sustainability, no savings targets were imposed on Communities as part of the review. Findings from the review will be actioned over the course of this financial year. I may have just said everything that the director general was about to say, but I will hand over to see whether he wants to add anything else.

**Mr M. Rowe:** Only to go into more detail, thank you, minister. In terms of what was in scope, as the minister said, it is not about frontline services; it is more about corporate services, effectively. That included a range of things across our agency in divisions that included: strategic policy and stewardship; governance integrity and reform; people; finance; contracting; corporate and ministerial support; and facilities. The recommendations addressed four key areas: further integration of non-frontline delivery—following the machinery-of-government changes, it is important to keep attending to the opportunities for integration where it makes sense to do so—as well as rebalancing transactional and strategic activity across all functions, supporting greater agility, and reprioritising our work. That is the summary of the focus that we will be implementing now.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** What is the time frame for not only the delivery or the completion of the review, but also the implementation of the functional review?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will hand over to the director general, who is primarily responsible for that.

**Mr M. Rowe:** The nature of the recommendation will influence the timing of when it will be adopted. For example, some of the recommendations pointed to a need for additional focus on baseline systems in the organisation—that is, the underlying human resources and finance systems. That is something for which we will be pursuing additional resources from the government. There will be other changes flowing out over the out years in relation to resourcing in different areas of the agency and that will be managed according to natural attrition and changes to the organisational structure over time. When it will be implemented will depend on which recommendation. Some have already effectively been achieved; others will take a bit longer.

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** While we are on page 517, I direct the minister to paragraphs 10.1 and 10.2. Can the minister outline how that will help to maintain improvements in child protection outcomes?

[12.30 pm]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to talk about this because it is the core work of the department to make sure that children across our community are kept safe. A key focus has been to ensure that Aboriginal children receive maximum safety and wellness outcomes. In fact, Aboriginal children make up 57 per cent of children in care in our state, and that is a reality that we do not accept and that we want to challenge and improve on. Child safety is always the priority, but we know that to make inroads into reducing the number of Aboriginal children who are being taken into care we need to work in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, and their respective service organisations. We are starting to see results in some of that work. The member has probably heard me refer to this before, but we have seen the lowest annual rate of children going into care in more than 20 years. We have also seen the lowest growth rate for Aboriginal children in care since 2004. The total number of children in the care of the CEO has dropped by 154 in 2020–21, from 5 498 to 5 344. This includes the significant number of Aboriginal children in care being reduced by 0.8 per cent, which is the first reduction since 1996. We credit these results to

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

our commitment to early intervention. Since coming to government, we have invested a total of \$112.5 million towards early intervention in child protection. One program being delivered is the Aboriginal in-home support service, which provides intensive in-home practical support for Aboriginal families to address safety issues and to keep children safely at home, and when children do go into care, it is for as short a period as possible and we reunify them as quickly as we can. As at 31 March this year, of the referrals made to the Aboriginal in-home support service between April 2019 and March 2020, 91 per cent of children were kept safely at home 12 months later. I repeat: between April 2019 and March 2020, 91 per cent of children were kept safely at home 12 months later, which is a real achievement. In May this year, I was pleased to announce a further \$10.3 million investment in a two-year expansion of that program, which is being led by the Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. The program is currently being delivered in the metropolitan area and this funding extension will support the work to design future expansion into regional areas. We are pleased with that work and hope that we can continue to expand to not only keep children safe, but also, if possible, keep them safe with their families.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 525, child protection assessments and investigations, and specifically the line item “Employees (Full-Time Equivalents)”. For the reporting period, for each child protection worker, how many case loads were over the recommended limit of 15?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Just while we are looking for those figures, I thought the member for Vasse would point out the growth in the number of FTEs in child protection over the forward estimates. I know the member would be as pleased as I am to see the government funding additional FTEs.

Within the Department of Communities, the management of child protection case loads is in accordance with the 2007 Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission order. Over the last year, the average case load ratio per worker has remained below the upper limit of 15 as stipulated by the order. Communities does not support the movement of cases for the purpose of data collection. Team leaders monitor and reassign cases in accordance with the need, which is reflected in the movement of cases and changes to an individual worker’s case load. Cases that are unable to be allocated to a caseworker are allocated to a team leader as the nominated liaison officer for monitoring and tasking of actions. These cases are placed on the monitor list. The management of the monitor list is on a one-off triage process. The child and family’s circumstances are regularly reviewed to assess any change to safety and risk factors. When a full-time caseworker is not allocated to a child and family, tasks are completed, where necessary, by other support staff and caseworkers within the district.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Just to clarify, the minister does not have information about how many case loads are over the upper limit—over 18?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thanks, member. I think I referred to the average case load ratio remaining below the upper limit, but I can say that as at 4 June 2021, 712.56 FTEs were available for casework and a total of 85 caseworkers—not FTE—had a case load of 15 or more recorded in the system. Of a total of 712.5 FTE, 85 workers—not FTE—had a case load of 15 or more recorded in the system.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay. Thank you. During the reporting period, how many child protection workers ceased working for the department?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We do not have that information, sorry.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is the minister able to provide it as supplementary information?

**The CHAIR:** Is that something the member can put on notice?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am a bit unsure what the question is; does it include people who have resigned or people who have taken advantage of the voluntary targeted separation scheme? There could be many reasons that people have concluded working for the department in the child protection area. I am not exactly sure what the member wants.

**Ms L. METTAM:** How many child protection workers have left the role, whether they have resigned or moved into another position? Over the reporting period, how many child protection workers ceased working in that role?

**The CHAIR:** When you say “child protection workers”, do you mean everyone who works at the Department for Child Protection and Family Support or do you mean frontline workers? The member will need to clarify this before the minister can assist her.

**Ms L. METTAM:** We are dealing with a specific line item.

**The CHAIR:** The specific line item refers to full-time employees; it does not refer to frontline workers or caseworkers. The line item to which the member referred does not assist the minister.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Over the reporting period, how many caseworkers have ceased working for the department?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I do not have that information and I am not sure what the member is hoping to elicit from that information. We have funded positions. We have FTEs, and that is usually the discussion with any government

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

department—how many FTEs have been allocated to do particular work. In fact, I said that I was hoping that the member for Vasse would be happy with the numbers that are reflected on page 525 because the number of full-time equivalents in 2020–21 is 562 but that number jumps to 575 in 2021–22. The cost-and-demand model has continued to provide for more FTE. People may have resigned for any number of reasons. I am not sure what the information would tell us. I am happy to discuss how many FTEs have been allocated to do child protection work within the department. This government is providing an increased number of FTEs.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Just to clarify, is the minister not willing to provide that information?

**The CHAIR:** The minister is perplexed as to what it is the member is seeking—I gather that is the issue.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Someone may have resigned for any number of personal reasons. There are myriad issues why someone would resign from the department, but an FTE position would be available and the position would be filled. I am not sure what it tells us to know whether someone resigned from the department for any number of reasons.

[12.40 pm]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to the table on page 514 which has the heading “Spending Changes” on the previous page. Under ongoing initiatives is the Aboriginal community connectors program. No money seems to have been spent on that program this year, but two allocations have been made: \$6.8 million in the current budget and \$7.2 million in the forward estimates. Is this another short-term commonwealth-sponsored program or is it a state program? What does it achieve, what does it aim to achieve, where will it be based and what communities will be able to access it?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will answer the question in two parts. These are spending changes. If we allocated money and spent it last year, it will not appear in this table. In 2019–20, the budget for Aboriginal community patrols or Aboriginal community connectors—that is the new name for the patrols and why the member might be a little confused about the program—was \$6.572 million. We have increased that amount over future years.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is the minister saying that there is an underlying allocation of \$6.5 million and that we have added another \$6.8 million this year?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No. I said that the table that the member referred to is a table of spending changes. We allocated money and spent that money in past years, so there is no line item under 2020–21 because there is no spending change. Sorry, I gave the member the wrong year. In 2020–21, the budget was \$6.758 million —

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Why does it have \$6.841 million in the budget papers?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is not there because it was not a spending change. This table outlines the spending —

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** That is the actual money.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes. That is the actual amount.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is the spending change the difference between those two figures or is it an extra \$6.8 million?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is not extra money. It is the amount that is estimated to be spent in 2021–22.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** All right, and then \$7.2 million in the following year —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Exactly.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** — and then nothing after that. Is that because it is a commonwealth-funded program?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No; it is not a commonwealth-funded program. It is what the member might remember being called the Aboriginal community patrols program. It is now called the Aboriginal community connectors program and we have funded it for two years. We have extended service agreements and will continue to work on service redesign for better program outcomes. Procurement for 2022–23 service agreements will be conducted in 2021–22 to ensure the department’s compliance with government procurement and contracting policies. The Aboriginal community connectors will be using a new mobile data collection application, or a connect app, to allow for near-instant data reporting to better measure outcomes that will assist in the program’s evaluation in 2022. The program will continue to place a greater focus on prevention and collaboration with other agencies in partnership with local government, businesses and community sector organisations that align with the state’s Aboriginal wellbeing priorities. In 2021–22, there is program funding for that in the Gascoyne, the goldfields, the Kimberley, the midwest, the Perth metropolitan area and the Pilbara, and there are some statewide costs as well.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The department has not slated to change that program in the next year or two and it is working on extending it into the future, depending on circumstances, demand et cetera. What happens when some of the communities receive a cash allocation? For instance, there has been a native title settlement in the midwest with a rather large cash allocation going into those communities, as there will be in the south west in various boodjars. Will those communities then take on some of those services? Does the minister see that as part of the future funding arrangement for these types of patrols, or are they slated to continue to be a function of government?

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am not the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and I would not venture to try to answer that question about what is contemplated within those native title settlements. For a more accurate answer, the member is probably better off asking the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to the table on page 514 and the second line item under ongoing initiatives, “Child Protection—Cost and Demand Growth”. What are the reasons for the significant variance in the spending changes in the forward estimates?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The line item that the member identified is about the effect of the cost-and-demand model of funding. Although that system has been in place since 2008–09, it has been refined and changed over the years. In answer to the member’s question, there are two components to the total amount. One is “salary expenses” and the other is “all other expenses”. The salary expenses for the cost-and-demand model do not decrease, but increase from 2021–22 over the forward estimates. It is the “all other expenses” and some of the overheads that are changed and result in that negative figure that the member referred to in 2022–23. It is not the salary component that changes but the “all other expenses” or overheads. Out of the total amount, the salary expenses from 2021–22 increase to \$5.4 million; in 2022–23, they increase to \$5.729 million; in 2023–24, they increase to \$17.23 million; and in 2024–25, they increase to \$28.995 million. They are significant increases in the salary component, which I know the member will be happy to hear about. For “all other expenses”, some of which are the overheads and interagency transfers, there is a decrease. In 2021–22, it is a decrease of \$4.956 million, and in 2022–23, it is a decrease of \$8.627 million. That gives a total in 2022–23 of a decrease of \$2.898 million. I hope that makes sense.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That decrease, as it appears in the budget papers, does not affect any frontline services. In fact, the salaries go up, as I indicated.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to each of the six service areas and the full-time equivalent employee numbers —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** What page number, member?

[12.50 pm]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Page 522. There are 384 FTEs in community services. In service area 2, “Homelessness Support Services”, there are 16 people; in area 3, “Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services”, there are 365 people; in area 4, “Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence”, there are 46; in area 5, there are 575 —

**The CHAIR:** The member is referring to pages 523 and 524.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am asking about the total number of employees that the minister is responsible for, basically. In area 6, “Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO’s Care” —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I do not mean to interrupt, but I am not following the member at all. What page number are we on?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am asking the minister about all the employees in the minister’s various service areas. According to the budget document, the minister is responsible for six areas; so the various number of employees in each of the six areas —

**The CHAIR:** Minister, the member is spanning the services and key efficiency indicators from page 522 through to page 526.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, and each one has the number of full-time equivalent employees. In relation to the department’s provision of incentives, or shall we say facilitating people to be vaccinated against COVID-19, is there a program to ensure that employees in frontline services are at least encouraged to be vaccinated? Are there opportunities for people to be vaccinated on the job, or is time allocated for people to leave work to get vaccinated? Will some sort of record be kept of employees’ vaccinations into the future?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Now we have got to the bottom of what we are talking about, I will ask the director general to talk about this because I know he has been directly involved.

**Mr M. Rowe:** The department has been actively encouraging all staff to be vaccinated, particularly those in frontline roles who work with children or vulnerable people. As the member is aware, that is not compulsory, and neither is it compulsory for staff to report whether they have been vaccinated or not. We have a very easy to use online facility that staff are encouraged to use to notify us when they have been vaccinated, either for their first vaccination or second. We have a record of who has been vaccinated from those amongst our staff who have been willing to tell us. Suffice to say, it is an ongoing program that we absolutely encourage all our staff to be vaccinated and we hope that they do so.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** We know that certain health professionals, and staff in disability services et cetera, have to be vaccinated. I take it that none of the department’s workers in service areas 1 to 6 fall into that category?

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Simone McGurk; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Mia Davies;  
Mr Hugh Jones; Mr Shane Love

---

**Mr M. Rowe:** That would be a matter for the Chief Health Officer to determine if there was to be an obligation on our staff to be vaccinated, and we would await a direction if that were the case.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to paragraph 14 on page 517 and the implementation of the functional review of corporate functions that was completed in 2020–21.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Moore is indicating to you that he has already asked about that.

**Ms L. METTAM:** It must have been when I was out!

I refer to the heading “New Initiatives” on page 514 and the women’s refuge expansion in Peel and Kwinana. How many women currently access this service?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The two services that the member referred to—the one in Peel is called Warlang Bidi and the one in Kwinana is called Andrea Mia—were opened last November. Both have facilities for six individuals or families. We made a commitment during COVID for both those services to increase their capacity—to effectively double their capacity. That building work is expected to be finalised by the end of the year. That will increase the capacity of both those facilities by six units each.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Does the minister anticipate that no further funding will be required after 2024–25? Will that mark the completion of the expansion of both those refuges in terms of the investment in the capital expansion?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The ongoing money that is allocated under “New Initiatives” is the operational money that is required to operate those refuges.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am unsure whether my next question comes under “homelessness”. I will attempt to ask a question about the line item “Teenagers in Need of Crisis Accommodation Facility” under the heading “Election Commitments” on page 514. I am not sure whether that falls under the minister’s area or under Housing. Can I have some further information regarding the particular election commitment made to that program?

**The CHAIR:** It is on page 514.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to answer that question, member. The commitment made during the election campaign in March this year was to provide the organisation called Youth Futures with an additional \$3.4 million to support service provision costs. That is the line item “Teenagers in Need of Crisis Accommodation Facility”. Youth Futures is currently funded to provide accommodation to teenagers in need of crisis accommodation services, known as TINOCA. The McGowan government election commitment is to replicate the existing service and create a second TINOCA service, to be provided in the northern suburbs. The current TINOCA service provides support and accommodation to young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, using a case management approach to address identified issues that have contributed to the young person’s homelessness. The program assists teenagers to move to more stable, long-term accommodation and reduce the likelihood of future homelessness. With the model, six young people can be accommodated in crisis accommodation at any time, including the transitional accommodation program, which provides medium-term accommodation and support for an additional six young people.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Will this in effect expand the Youth Futures program and support an additional six teenagers?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is right.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What are the eligibility criteria? How does the program work?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I have partly outlined how the program works. In terms of the expansion, Youth Futures has recently advised the Department of Communities that it has purchased a block of land in Merriwa for the service, and expects to receive draft building plans shortly. As I outlined, the service delivery will be modelled around the existing service called Teenagers in Need of Crisis Accommodation—TINOCA. Criteria are outlined for those young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Most people who have visited Youth Futures recognise that it is working with some very vulnerable young people and it is a good service to support, and we are happy to do that.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is a referral made by the department of child protection, or how is a teenager who is homeless able to access this important service?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am advised that referrals can come from any source.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

*Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*