

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2018–19 BUDGET ESTIMATES



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2018**

**SESSION FIVE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES — CHILD PROTECTION**

Members

**Hon Alanna Clohesy (Chair)
Hon Tjorn Sibma (Deputy Chair)
Hon Diane Evers
Hon Aaron Stonehouse
Hon Colin Tincknell**

Hearing commenced at 3.45 pm

Hon SUE ELLERY

Minister representing the Minister for Child Protection, examined:

Mr GRAHAME SEARLE

Director General, examined:

Mr BRAD JOLLY

Executive Director, examined:

Ms JACKIE TANG

Assistant Director General, Child Protection and Family Support, examined:

Ms HELEN NYS

Acting Assistant Director, Policy and Service Design, examined:

Mr LIAM CARREN

Chief Financial Officer, examined:

Ms TINA PRITCHARD

Director, Finance, examined:

The CHAIR: Welcome to the 2018–19 budget estimates hearing with the Department of Communities; Child Protection. On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I welcome you to today's hearings. Can the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses".

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIR: It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. The hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before you answer the question. Agencies have an important role and duty in assisting the committee to scrutinise the budget papers. The committee values your assistance with this.

Minister, do you have a brief opening statement?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not, Madam Chair.

Hon DIANE EVERS: My first question starts on page 424 and is in regard to the regional reform fund. I notice that this fund is mentioned under several key efficiency indicators on page 424 under numbers 3, 5, 6 and 7. The total for the regional reform fund is shown as about \$24 million. Where is this shown in the income statement on page 439? Is the contribution from the regional reform fund expected to be continued in the forward estimates?

The CHAIR: Member, could you please give us the page numbers again?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We are having difficulty finding the right page.

Hon DIANE EVERS: It starts on page 424. I should have said it is in the notes. It is the first note on the third key efficiency indicator and then it appears in the notes for 5, 6 and 7 as well.

The CHAIR: Is it “Explanation of Significant Movements” in the middle of the page?

Hon DIANE EVERS: Correct.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I understand it, you are asking for an explanation of that.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I do not see it in the income statement specifically and I just want to make sure that it is included there. Also, that would show me whether it was expected to continue in the forward estimates or whether it is a one-off for this year only.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Member, you also took us to page 439. If I take you to the part of the table that says “Income from State Government”, you can see two references to the royalties for regions fund. The first one—the regional community services fund—is where those funds sit.

[3.50 pm]

Hon DIANE EVERS: Great. Okay, that is about \$16 million of it. It looked like it was about \$24 million. Then also would that mean that in the forward estimates that it would be included in those figures as well—the \$60 million? Will that amount of money continue to come in for those services?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am going to see if I can drive my file myself, because then I will be more confident, so just bear with me. One of the things that I have noted is that every single agency prepares their ministerial file in a different way. The information I have is where the respective components are coming from. You are going to have to ask the question again, I am sorry.

Hon DIANE EVERS: The question is on the regional reform fund, which is mentioned in the notes for the key efficiency indicators, but only for the one year—for the year 2018–19. Then on page 439, if that \$16 million of the regional community services fund is related to that regional reform fund, could I then expect that that amount of funding will continue for the next three years following?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I understand the question now, and the answer is —

Mr SEARLE: Thank you, minister. Some of that funding is for very specific one-off line items, other is for recurrent funding. For instance, things like the operating funds for the Broome short stay, which will open later this year, are included in that. That will be a recurring piece of funding. At the other end of the scale, there is funding in there to build swimming pools in remote Aboriginal communities, which are once-off capital items. So there will be a mixture of both—things that get carried forward into the future budget estimates and things that are one-off construction costs.

Hon DIANE EVERS: Should I be able to find those one-off construction costs in your assets?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can tell you what some of them are. There is \$7.36 million for remote swimming pools in Balgo and Kalumburu; there is \$1.66 million for the regional community childcare development fund stage 2; \$1.31 million, which is operating funding for the Broome Aboriginal short-stay accommodation; and \$1.06 million for the Kimberley family violence project to deliver outreach services to victims and perpetrators of family violence.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Minister, I draw your attention to page 416 of the budget papers concerning significant issues impacting the agency. My attention has been captured predominantly by the first dot point there. The opening sentence states —

To help address fragmented service delivery to individuals, families and communities, the Department brings together functions from six former entities and over 5,500 staff across 151 current office locations.

That being established as the context, could I get an understanding, please, of what specific child protection focus the department has and what proportion of your workload, or the time of the minister, is spent addressing these issues?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can we get a bit more specificity? If you are asking about the time that the minister allocates, I cannot tell you that.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: This is not just germane to the Department of Communities. I have been frustrated—and this goes beyond the term of this government—that significant issues as they are presented or reflected in the budget papers sometimes are euphemistic, unclear, vague or too all-encompassing. This is an all-encompassing statement—the first one. I think you would take that. I am concerned that in the process of undergoing a pretty significant machinery-of-government change, which brings together individual workplace priorities and practices and cultures and systems, what risk to service delivery comes with that, particularly in Child Protection and what have you had to do to mitigate those risks while simultaneously undergoing a big mechanical change?

Hon SUE ELLERY: In fact, the purpose was to reduce the risk because it was about better coordination between services and trying to remove some of that silo effect. I am a former Minister for Child Protection, so I know that if you do not get joined-up services, then you are not providing the best kind of care to those children who are either at risk of coming into care or children who are in care. In fact, the intent was to provide better joined-up services. I might ask the director general to give you some examples of how by bringing these particular functions together the agency is able to deliver a better coordinated service.

Mr SEARLE: I thank the member for the question, because it exercises my mind every day. The challenge of trying to bring together agencies with different cultures, different approaches and different attitudes to the people it deals with is significant. We spend a lot of time working with the staff about why we are there, what we are actually trying to achieve and understanding how the various components of the previous departments actually can work together to get better outcomes. As I mentioned in the earlier hearing, we are now looking at how we go to a regionally based service model.

We have had a couple of instances recently from our Mirrabooka office, as it turns out, where Child Protection and Housing staff have worked together to get a solution that would never have happened in the past. They had a three month old Aboriginal girl who had been taken into care and allocated to white foster parents. It turned out through searching that they found a grandmother who was happy to take the child on, but she did not have her own housing, she had a debt to the Housing Authority and she was not on the waitlist. By working together they found a way that they could find the grandmother a house, get her into the house and three weeks later she had the baby with her rather than with white foster carers. That is a direct consequence of agencies working together because they recognise they are in the one boat and heading in the same direction. That would never have happened. In fact, the advice we have from the Child Protection officers is that that baby would have stayed with those foster carers indefinitely because this solution would not have been available. They are the pluses we see in the merger.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thanks for that. I think intuitively you can appreciate that there are synergies in bringing together human services functions, but, no doubt, for the benefits there are also risks. I have absolutely no doubt that it exercises your mind, Mr Searle, or exercises your mind, minister, even though you are representing the minister here, because you are a former Minister for Child Protection, but what I am concerned about as a member of this place is that the government is inadvertently winding things back to a point before the tragedy that led to the Prudence Ford report, which then consequently led to the disaggregation of agencies for the reason that there was a view

that that then Department of Community Development had lost its focus, because it was too all-encompassing. What are you doing, as best you can, to ensure that the tragedy that precipitated that review does not happen again under this new framework?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will make some comments to begin with. I was the minister who was tasked with implementing the recommendations of the Ford review, and the government that I was part of then accepted all of them except for one, which related to mandatory reporting, I think. It proposed that we did not do that; in fact, we did do that. Things have fundamentally changed in Child Protection since the circumstances that led to the Ford review, but, as always in that portfolio, constant vigilance is required. At a macro level, government has established a cabinet subcommittee based around social policy areas to make sure that at a ministerial level we are talking to each other about how we might better coordinate activities between respective ministers. That cabinet subcommittee is doing really important work. One of the examples, I think, of joined-up government working well is the way that we have developed the Target 120 project, in particular.

In respect of any particular measures that might be internal to the department, I will get Mr Searle to add to that.

[4.00 pm]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Before you do, Mr Searle, I suppose that is where my interest is. I understand that there is executive government coordination, but, like any service delivery, it is what happens at the working level that matters. Mr Searle, these are probably never going to be reflected to the degree that I would like in budget papers, but do you have some internal metrics to measure performance in child protection that guides whether or not you are working within the parameters of the system or that might indicate that the system internally is stressed in any way, and, if so, what are they?

Mr SEARLE: There are a couple of things. The historical measures of performance are, to some extent, a bit bizarre. The number of kids in care does not tell you whether we are doing a good job or not. I think we have used the words early intervention in the space for a long time, but we have not actually done a whole lot of early intervention. The language has been a long way in front of the practice. What we are focusing on, and we are starting this in the Kimberley, is a single management stream—a serious focus on early intervention with families, because there are a whole lot of contributing factors to child neglect and family and domestic violence that we need to address earlier. We are creating a regional director with locality managers that are very specific across the region. That is one management structure, but alongside that, we are going to keep the senior child protection officer in the region—the current regional director—as a specialist resource for the region around child protection. Whilst they are part of a single management stream and a single reporting structure, there is the availability of specialist advice at the most senior level within the region that all child protection officers can have access to. While we have tried to take a more holistic view of the families, we are not in any way diminishing the focus on child protection within that framework.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is an interesting example. I would like to keep track of how performance occurs over time. Mr Searle, you referred to the number of children and young people taken into the care of the CEO as probably the more public-facing measure. My understanding is that that number does nothing but grow, although the rate of growth fluctuates over time. Could you give me an indication, please, of what the average length of time a child would stay under the care of the CEO and—it is one thing to talk about numbers fluctuating under care, but what I am also interested to know is—whether there is any fluctuation in the period of time that the child is under the care of the CEO?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Before I ask Mr Searle to make some comments about that, I might make some comments as well. The general comment that he made earlier that it is really not a measure of success or otherwise I think is worth putting a comment on the record about because I would not want people to misunderstand that. In one sense, it is a measure of the state paying greater attention to these matters in that previously where we stopped at the door of houses and did not intervene to take a child into care, the numbers were lower. A very superficial analysis of that would have said that if you have low numbers of kids going to care, you do not have a problem. In fact, the problem was behind closed doors. A higher number of interventions, which may result in a higher number of children coming into care, in one sense is a very positive sign because it indicates a high degree of activity and intervention. I am sure that everybody in this room understands that, but I think for the purposes of anyone reading this debate in punter land, it is important to understand that a greater degree of intervention, I think, is a good sign. What is disappointing is that that reflects the level of dysfunction that is continuing to happen in our community. That is a concern for all of us and that is why we need to do more work around the broader social policy areas. In terms of how long kids stay in care and averages, I will start with Mr Searle, but maybe Ms Tang can add to that.

Mr SEARLE: There is not an average answer to that. It really is case-by-case. Some children come in to care for a very short period of time because of a crisis in the family and are dealt with through the system. Other young people will spend their entire childhood in care. It is not something that you can say, "Here is the average", because it is very much a case-by-case, family-by-family circumstances.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Are those numbers captured, though? Is that data captured in any sense? I do not expect you to tell me now, but if it is possible, by way of supplementary maybe.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Ms Tang to give you some further information.

Ms TANG: I think it is a bit deceiving when you see the number of children in care as a number because it looks like it is a static number which is just cumulative. But if you think about it over time, we may have 1 000 children come in any one year. But children are also going home. We might give you an average, but, as Mr Searle said, we have some children who might be in care just provisionally for a very short period of time, and others who are with us until they are aged 18 years and we may continue to support until they are 25. I am not sure of the value of that information. Obviously, we want to reduce the number of children coming in to care and quickly return them home, but the ultimate factor is safety. This is where the number of children in care is—is it 5 000 or 10 000? If the children are not safe, then they need to be in care. If there is a safe home for them to go to, then they need to be at home and we need to work with permanency planning and with reunification.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I appreciate that the data that might be captured might not be all that informative or may potentially be misunderstood. Nevertheless, I would find it useful, just to get an understanding of—it sounds mechanistic—the throughput of the system. If it is possible to then explain the data in the way that you have in written form, I would find that valuable if that can be taken as supplementary.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We cannot provide you with averages. It is not collected, and even if it was, it would be meaningless. We will take on notice your request. They might be able to do a snapshot, but can I put a caveat on it? It might not be possible.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Sure. Okay.

The CHAIR: That is any possible data that reflects the quantum of children in care at any one time as much as possible.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might describe it this way: if it is possible to provide you with information that reflects numbers in and out, we will try to do that.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thank you.

[Supplementary Information No E1.]

The CHAIR: Before we proceed to Hon Colin Tincknell, I need to recognise a new witness.

I ask you for the record to state your full name, the capacity in which you appear before the committee and whether you have seen, understood and signed a document headed “Information for Witnesses”.

Ms PRITCHARD: Tina Pritchard—I am an adviser and I have signed all the documentation.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I would like to continue on the discussion that you have just previously had and get a little bit more understanding. I have one question: how many children will the funding provide for in the 2018–19 year? How many people are you funding?

[4.10 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: Are you looking at a particular —

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I am looking at Aboriginal children in the CEO’s care.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Are you looking at a particular reference on a particular page?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Yes, page 420. It talks about significant movements regarding funding and increases in placement needs of Aboriginal children in the CEO’s care. My first question is: how many children will be funded in 2018–19?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am just going to make sure that we are on the right page, honourable member.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: “Support Services for Children in the CEO’s Care”, item 7.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Perhaps I can give you the information I have and then we can see if that is helpful to you. We know that as at 31 March this year, of the 4 917 children in care, 55 per cent were Aboriginal, so that is 2 712. If what you are asking is, “Is there enough money in there to look after those children?”, which is what I think you were talking about, perhaps I can ask Mr Searle to explain the demand model, the model with which Treasury funds the agency. It is very much linked to the number of children and their particular needs. That might help you, and if I ask Mr Searle to start by explaining that funding model to you, we will see how far we can get.

Mr SEARLE: A number of years ago the department worked very closely with the Department of Treasury to come up with a forward funding model for the department. It is very difficult to estimate demand for these sorts of services, but there is now an agreed model in place so that the funding for the department is targeted around the number of kids in care and the expectation. I am very comfortable that we are appropriately funded for the children in care and the delivery of services to those children.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: You have just been previously discussing that, obviously, we want to try to reduce the number of people in care. Can you give us some idea of what the prevention strategies are? Prevention is everything, we all know that. Can you just say a little more on that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Sure, I will ask Mr Searle, and perhaps Ms Tang can add to that. There are tiers of services that are provided and they go from the lowest level of support to assist families in need to the highest level of support—that is, to take children into care. The intention of those services at the front end is to support the families to continue to safely provide for and care for their children themselves. Obviously, it is commonsense that if you get that end right, you reduce the need for the

pointy end and, frankly, more expensive services, but also, by that point children can also be quite damaged. I will start with Mr Searle and then Ms Tang can add some.

Mr SEARLE: There are a couple of things we have done this year which are really indicators of the direction going forward. The government has just agreed to fund a \$20 million package for in-home intervention with Aboriginal families in the metropolitan area. This is Aboriginal-controlled organisations actually working with families to improve the way the household operates, help them manage, help them organise—help them. This is part of that early intervention to stop getting to the stage where we have to intervene and take kids away. Similarly, in the Kimberley we have had an early intervention process running out of the Regional Services Reform Unit with child protection for probably the last 18 months, focusing on individual families that we think are at risk.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: By doing that, you are changing the habit, because someone who is running the household has probably never seen the way a household is supposed to run, in their past life.

Mr SEARLE: Quite often it is the case, but it is about being active earlier and trying to help people understand what they need to do—how to get their kids to school on time; all of these really basic things. The two families they work with in the Kimberley had eight kids, I think, between them. Eighteen months later, none of those kids have come into care. We are relatively confident, at least at some level, that this model works. It is how far back we reach and how intensively you do it and what the cost of that is by comparison, but we think it is a much better result. That is the direction of travel.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Thank you, that is great.

This is more a budget item now. I refer to page 420, and the total of the first five service items in the service summary table that relate to child protection and family support. The total is \$292 million, yet unacceptable levels, as we know, of family and domestic violence still persist. Other than money, what else can bring down family violence to an acceptable level? I know that is a hard one.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are a range of things that government is doing, and we came to government with specific commitments around family and domestic violence. But part of our attempt to break down the barriers between government agencies was about trying to get people to work more closely together, so that you avoid that situation in which you might have families who just move between different types of crises and therefore are accessing different types of agencies without anyone having an oversight view of what was going on; and how we intervene in a smarter way, not necessarily more often, but in a smarter way. Then we seriously, in Western Australia, need to tackle the meth question. We came to government as well with specific plans around those and to the extent that this agency participates in those, I will get someone to talk to you about those in a minute. There is not one single solution to that issue; a lot of it is about changing and we have changed significantly over the last 30 to 40 years the culture that says you do not look at what goes on behind closed doors. We have changed that. We have made it safer for women to speak up and speak out, but obviously it is still an issue. The fact that there are nine or 10 Western Australians who die every year related to family and domestic violence is a number that is still too high. We need to do more about that. But I might ask Mr Searle, or if there is somebody else who can talk about some of the programs that we are doing.

Ms NYS: I can speak to some of the projects that are being funded in the domestic violence space and these are all projects that come out of the government's commitments to try to prevent and reduce domestic violence. I think one of the first things to note is that there is now a Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Two or three of the initiatives—and these are all in the budget papers. There is funding to develop and expand on existing programs for perpetrators of

domestic violence, they are called Breathing Space. That is a residential program, which I think is up to four months, in which perpetrators of domestic violence can remove themselves from their family and live in a facility where they receive intensive counselling and support to address the issues that might be leading them to be perpetrators of domestic violence.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Has that been working for a while?

Ms NYS: Yes. There has been one in existence for some time. In recognition that it has actually been a successful model, there has been continued funding and the expansion of the service to the current provider. There is also an intention to provide two additional refuges for women experiencing family and domestic violence. One of them will be in the Peel region and the other is yet to be decided. In addition, there is funding which will be looking at joint discussions with the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence around respectful relationships, which is an education program for young men in schools about respectful ways to address women and how to resolve issues that they may have without resorting to violence. We are discussing how that program might be delivered at this point in time.

The last one I just want to mention is that at this point in time, the Department of Communities is hosting a policy consortium, which is bringing together people from across the sector, including substantial numbers of Aboriginal people—the research sector, the universities, across government and non-government organisations—to look at the issue of family and domestic violence and to consider a 10-year plan to reduce and prevent domestic violence.

[4.20 pm]

The CHAIR: Thanks, member. We might leave it there. Just to note, this is a hearing with the Department of Communities, particularly about child protection. But I let that one through because of the crossover on the two issues and the crossover in the minister representing as well. Sometimes we cannot, but we will see if we can focus on child protection. We might go to Hon Nick Goiran.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Just on that, I presume, though, that the answers given by the witnesses still need to be correct because we have just been told in response to Hon Colin Tincknell that the decision has been made to have one Breathing Space in the Peel region and the second location has not been determined. Yet, in answers given to me in questions prior to the hearing, I have been told that there are two regions—this is in answer to question 2(c)—one is the Peel region and other one is the south metropolitan region.

Hon SUE ELLERY: In respect to refuges?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes. Either the answer that was given to me is wrong or the evidence that has just been given is wrong.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might ask the officer if she wants to clarify anything she has said, but we do get to check the *Hansard* after this. If corrections do need to be made, of course we can do that and would do that.

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister, and there may also be a misunderstanding of the answer to the question on the part of members.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I just check with the officer if she wants to clarify anything?

Ms NYS: Yes, I can. Thank you, member. I was just avoiding specifics. The member is quite correct that one is in the Peel region and one is in the south metropolitan region. The reason I said it had not been announced is that it is not which area within the south metropolitan area. In which suburb it will be has not been decided.

The CHAIR: There we go—a complete misunderstanding.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Not at all a complete misunderstanding because what is the suburb in the Peel region then?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not sure that we are going to give out the suburbs that women's refuges are in. But if anything needs to be corrected, when we get the *Hansard* we will correct it.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, can I refer you to budget paper No 2, volume 2, page 420 and the itemised list of 23 services delivered by the Department of Communities. Is the Minister for Child Protection responsible for the first 10 of those services?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Are you in a position to take questions from members in respect of those first 10 services during this session?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, I can take the question. Whether I am in a position to give you a precise answer depends entirely on the question.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Under which of those service items are budgets needed to be prioritised to action the West Pilbara plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised that funding for the West Pilbara plan has come from a whole range of service areas, including some of those in that 10, but not limited to those within that 10.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So, which of those 10?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We are not in a position to break it down, but we are happy to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E2.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: How many staff have been allocated from the department to action the West Pilbara plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: They do not have the staff numbers here, but we can take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E3.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That unspecified number of staff that will be provided in due course on notice, do they work with other staff from other agencies to action the plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: How many?

Hon SUE ELLERY: How many what?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: How many staff are they working with from other agencies?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not in a position to quantify that and I could not take it on notice because, as you can understand from the logic of the question, there are other agencies. I am not sure that this minister and this part of her agency is able to give you an answer specifying how many staff from other agencies they might work with at any one time or over any single period.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: My earlier question was: do any of the staff from the Department of Communities, unspecified, to be provided on notice, work with staff from other agencies to action the plan? The response was yes. If the answer is yes, you know whom you are working with and I would like to know how many staff you are working with.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not trying to be difficult or obtuse at all, but part of the plan, as you would appreciate, I am sure, is based on agencies working together. The plan does not include specifying how many people from specific agencies they need to work with, but I will give you an example. It will include, I am sure, officers and staff from Child Protection working with officers in my agency,

the Department of Education, say, at one of the schools in one of the West Pilbara towns. Could the child protection office specify how many people they work with or could I, as the Minister for Education, tell you how many people they work with? I am not sure that it is a particularly practical measure of anything, but in any event I am not in a position to tell you how many staff they might work with. I can give you the range of agencies they might work with, but on any one day, there would be any number of particular staff. Of course, staff might be temporary or part-time or on leave or whatever, so I am not sure that we could even really measure it for you.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Well, let us make progress this way: which agencies do staff that have been allocated to action the West Pilbara plan on behalf of the Department of Communities work with?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can give you a list of the agencies. They are the other elements of Communities; Education; Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries; Justice; Police; Mental Health Commission; Training and Workforce Development; Prime Minister and Cabinet; Premier and Cabinet—I think that is it.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is that list in a document that is capable of being tabled?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, it is not.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Which ministers have been briefed on the plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: All of the ministers because it went through cabinet and it went through the cabinet subcommittee and it went through—all of the cabinet ministers who were there at the cabinet meeting when it was discussed.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Were briefings only done in cabinet on the West Pilbara plan or have the ministers been briefed outside of the cabinet process?

[4.30 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: No. Well, not only briefed, but involved in putting it together. As I indicated earlier, we have a cabinet subcommittee that brings together the relevant ministers on a whole range of social issues. We were all engaged. While the minister who I am representing today led the work, all of our respective agencies, ministerial officers and respective ministers were aware of various elements of putting together the plan, or involved in putting together various elements and then effectively signed off on it.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is it correct to say that there was a briefing for cabinet but then there were other individual briefings?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, it is not correct to say that.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Okay, so explain to the committee what was the form of briefings that took place.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is not correct to say that they were briefings—that is not correct. It was much more than that. Respective ministers from the list of agencies that I went through were involved in greater or larger degree in putting the plan together, although the work was definitely led by one minister. There were then discussions about the plan—I would not call them briefings—about the proposed plan at cabinet subcommittee level and then at cabinet. Decision-making is based on discussion and consideration of cabinet papers, not necessarily briefings.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So there were no briefings.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There may have been at various points, but if you are asking if cabinet received an official briefing, if I was to talk about that I would be talking about the processes of cabinet, which I

really cannot do. Nevertheless, without knowing what particular information you would want, I can tell you that this program was considered by cabinet.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Perhaps let us ask it this way: have any of the witnesses here today briefed the Minister for Child Protection on the West Pilbara plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Which of those witnesses?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The director general.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The director general is the only one of the witnesses here today that has briefed the minister on the West Pilbara plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Is there some particular information you are seeking because other than asking members to go back and check their diaries, I do not want to give you information that might not be correct and I do not want to ask them to go back and check their diaries unless I am sure that there is something that you are particularly looking for that we could be helpful about?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We are sure about the director general?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am sure about the director general.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: At the briefing at which the director general attended with the Minister for Child Protection, did the minister seek an assurance that none of the 184 victims of child sex offences in Roebourne are residing with a person charged or convicted with one or more child sex offences?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not going to provide you with an answer to that question now because there are two parties that need to recall what happened. I am representing the minister and she is not here. I am happy to take that question on notice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The director general is here.

Hon SUE ELLERY: And I am providing you with the answer.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: And you have indicated to me that the director general was personally present and I am asking whether an assurance was sought at that briefing and he is, according to you, the only person present here before the committee who is in a position to answer the question.

Hon SUE ELLERY: And I have given you the answer that I am going to give you. I am happy to take the question on notice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: You are refusing the director general to answer to the committee whether at the briefing he attended the minister sought an assurance.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I give the answers and if I need assistance, I will ask for it from the agency officers who are here today.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is right.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The answer that I am giving you is that I am happy to take your question on notice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, were you present at the briefing?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I was not. Honourable member, I am happy to take your question on notice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is unsatisfactory.

[Supplementary Information No E4.]

The CHAIR: The minister is only required to indicate whether the question can be answered and she has indicated that it will be taken on notice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Has the director general briefed any other minister on the West Pilbara plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: What I might do, honourable member, is take that on notice as well and provide you with an answer as to which ministers were briefed and in that sense, I want to be clear about what I mean by the word “briefed” because ministers considered, as I indicated earlier, this initiative as part of the cabinet process. I will not be giving you any information that goes to the cabinet process. But if there were briefings that, let us accept the definition being that public officers meet with a minister for the purpose of briefing them on a particular subject, I will check that and I am happy to take that on notice and provide you with an answer. What I cannot provide you with is the process of cabinet consideration and that includes the subcommittee of cabinet as well.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The director general is sitting no more than 30 centimetres away from you. Are you willing to ask him whether he has briefed any other minister on the West Pilbara plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, I have given you the answer to the question, which is that I am more than willing to provide you with an answer on notice that sets out how the briefings were conducted. The officers are here to assist me; if I think I need assistance from them, I will ask for it, otherwise I provide the answers.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I understand that. I am asking you, are you prepared to ask the director general?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I have given you my answer.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I did not hear the answer.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I have said it twice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Can you repeat it for the benefit of the committee? Are you prepared to ask the director general?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not sure that this is a particularly helpful line of questioning but the answer I have given previously —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I understand that. It was not intended to be helpful.

Hon SUE ELLERY: — and I will give it again if you would like to listen, is that I will take the question on notice and provide you with information about what briefings were provided to ministers outside of the cabinet process which considered this initiative.

[Supplementary Information No E5.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I have a number of questions that I will chunk into different points, if that is okay. The first question I want ask is in relation to page 416, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” and the first dot where it talks about MOG changes. I have been trying to get information about this particular matter for quite a while and I have not been able to get anywhere. What I would like to know is about the transition of youth justice from Corrective Services to the Department of Communities. The answers to the questions in Parliament I have been getting is that it is still on track to be moved over, but is it intended to sit in Child Protection, is it intended to sit in Communities or is it intended to operate as a separate agency? Madam Chair, I recognise that this may not be part of Child Protection, but it is unclear in the budget papers where it sits.

The CHAIR: I suggest you go ahead and ask the questions and what the minister is able to provide we will ask her to provide. What we have also been doing is putting those other questions that are not able to be answered today on ELS after the hearing —

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am hoping to get an answer today.

The CHAIR: Okay, otherwise we will take it on notice.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I want to be helpful so I will take it on notice. I am here in respect of Child Protection.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I take that to mean that we do know that youth justice will not be going into Child Protection?

Hon SUE ELLERY: You cannot take it mean that, which is why I want to take it on notice so that I get you the answer that will be accurate.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I have been trying to get answers to this in Parliament for quite some time and I have not been able to get an answer to that. As part of that question, I would really appreciate an estimated time frame for when that will be transferred as well.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You want to add that to the question on notice?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, please.

[Supplementary Information No E6.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 17, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” and the second dot point. This is, of course, Target 120. How are young people going to be identified or referred to the program? What other government agencies are involved?

[4.40 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can give you some information. The agency, with Treasury, is working on developing a model that will help to identify those people who should be provided with assistance under Target 120. That is a work in progress, so the model is not complete yet, but it is around building a database that measures a whole range of things, including interactions that lead you to believe this is a person or a family or whatever that has had significant ongoing, perhaps even multigenerational, contacts and requirements for assistance.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Minister, can I ask what is the estimated time frame for when you are expecting that criteria to be finalised?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think it is later this year. I think it is around September. I will check whether that needs to be clarified, but the advice I have is that it is around September.

Hon ALISON XAMON: What other government departments are involved in Target 120?

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is another example of many government agencies —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Are you able to list which ones are involved?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will try. It is education, health, justice, Treasury and police, but in addition to that, there is a range of non-government service providers who are engaged in the exercise as well.

Hon ALISON XAMON: My next question was about non-government organisations. Can you list the NGOs that are also involved?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We do not have a list here, but we are happy to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E7.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is Target 120 going to be using a caseworker model?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon ALISON XAMON: In that case, can we get some assurances that caseworkers are going to have specific expertise in FASD, AOD and mental health issues?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might make some general comments, but it would seem to me you would need a multi-skilled, multifaceted team to work on this and you would want to ensure that there were people and resources linked to both of those elements, for example, that you raised, in your team. Whether everybody has exactly the same skill set or experience is a different question.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am not asking if everybody is going to have exactly the same skill set. I am keen to know whether that is going to be identified as the necessary level of expertise at a minimum level with the caseworkers who are going to be managing those children.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Ms Tang to answer that.

Ms TANG: I am not directly responsible for the actual project, but the idea of Target 120 is a coordination of assessing risk and need with the services that are available. So, it is not about a caseworker necessarily having all the expertise, as you suggest, but a coordinating role to bring together: What are the needs of that young person? How do you connect them best with the service, and looking beyond the individual young person to their family as well? I am not familiar with the detail of what was in the job description form—JDF—for those coordinators and I do not know whether they have been built, but I understand the point around FASD and your concern around why you would want to see that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: As part of the plans being undertaken, is it intended that there are also going to be health and developmental assessments of the young people who are going to be part of that program, such as for FASD or other neurodevelopmental impairments or learning disabilities—perhaps serious mental health issues, autism? Are these things going to, as a matter of course, have a mechanism by which they can potentially be picked up?

Mr SEARLE: Absolutely. In order to appropriately engage with the young people we are talking about, you have to understand where they are coming from, what their capabilities are and what their limitations are, and those sorts of assessments are fundamental to that. We think a number of the NGOs we were referring to before will be service providers with those sorts of expertise, which they get referred to as part of the assessment or plan of action for those individual young people.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Minister, it sounds as though it is intended that the expertise will not lie in the team directly but it is going to operate on a system of referral pathways; is that correct?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, I think that is probably an accurate expectation.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Minister, has there been any mapping done in the areas that are going to be covered by Target 120 to ensure that the services are available, where necessary, for referral? Has any of that work been done?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised that yes, there has been work done around the initial site. I think part of the public announcement was that it would kick off at two particular sites, so there has been some work done around that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, to ensure that services are going to be available for referral in the first place.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There has been work done around doing that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: With the establishment of the linked database, is that going to require legislative change?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not think so, but, in any event, that work is happening now.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So it will not require it, you do not believe.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I said I do not think so, but the modelling is being done now.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I move on to another area, if that is okay.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Fine by me.

The CHAIR: You have time.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 424 and point 3, “Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services”. I am happy for you to take this question on notice, but can I please have a breakdown of the programs and the services provided for under this line item for 2016–17, 2017–18, and those budgeted for 2018–19?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will take that on notice.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I said I am happy for you to take that on notice, but I would like to put that on record.

[Supplementary Information No E8.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: In relation to this particular item, what specific programs are funded to provide parenting advice and early intervention support? I am not talking about intensive support. Is all the money concentrated at the crisis or intensive need end? I am aware that in the past there has been specific early intervention support. It has been raised with me that there are concerns that most of the money is being channelled into that crisis and intensive need end and I want to know what specific programs are still being provided for early intervention.

Ms TANG: In general terms, understanding that we will provide a response on notice, the earlier intervention, as it is termed, rather than early, is in relation to both the family support networks as well as intensive family support. The family support networks are at the earlier end and it is a matter of if people are presenting—families, parents are presenting—that they then work through with the lead family support network, which then refers on to services as required in the inquiry that agency may be providing. It provides a clear view about what the needs are, and then advising those individuals or families where best to get that service. It is, in a sense, brokering and making it an easier pathway, rather than families or parents having to find that themselves.

Hon ALISON XAMON: When you are talking about presenting, I am curious to know is that coming to the attention of child protection services or are we talking about much earlier intervention before we get to that point?

[4.50 pm]

Ms TANG: That may be coming through as a self-referral for a family reporting at a family support network, as in an agency that provides those services. They can self-refer to that agency; they do not need to come through child protection for that service.

The lead agency for that family support network may not necessarily provide that service but they might provide on-forwarding advice for that. The other is with our central intake service, which started in the metropolitan area last year. Inquiries can be made through that central intake, and it does not necessarily mean that someone has to be taken into the child protection system. That is what we are trying to do—where it is appropriate, to refer to other services. A family member or a parent may make a call to the central intake and the advice and discussion that they have with those workers might mean, as we say, a warm referral—a referral on, which is appropriate for their level of support or the intervention that is required, but it does not require the family to come into the system. It actually diverts them to a meaningful alternative to avoid them coming into the system, but of providing them support that they might require.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Minister, I would like to know what has happened particularly over the previous year, this year, and in the forward estimates, for the Best Beginnings program. I am happy

to take that on notice unless the details are there. I would also like to know about Strong Families and the responsible parenting services.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will need to take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No E9.*]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to point 3 on page 424 of the *Budget Statements*, the same area that I have been talking about. The note states the numbers of clients for the 2016–17 actual, the 2017–18 budget, 2017–18 estimated actual and 2018–19 budget target. I want to know: why is the 2017–18 estimated actual so much lower than the budget?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not in a position to give you an answer to that now, so we will need to take that on notice as well.

[*Supplementary Information No E10.*]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am going to move on to another area then, because I had other questions around that. I will move to page 427, “Explanation of Significant Movements”, and the notes at point 1. Why has the Enhanced Transition to School program been discontinued?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Mr Jolly to provide an answer to that. I understand it is related to a national partnership that ended.

Mr JOLLY: Yes, that is correct. That particular program is funded by the national partnership agreement on universal access, so the money for that particular program does not appear in the budget papers until a new agreement is signed.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I take from that answer that there is a hope that that particular program will continue if the federal government lifts its game; is that what I am hearing?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not here as minister for education; I am here as the Minister for Child Protection —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, it is in the child protection budget.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The reference is to funding that came out of the Department of Education, you will be aware, so I am not in a position to give you an answer as to where those negotiations are with that particular national partnership. I am happy to take that on notice, but you need to understand that I am taking it on notice for the Minister for Child Protection.

Hon ALISON XAMON: That is fine. I just want an answer; I am really not fussed about where the answer comes from, to be perfectly honest.

[*Supplementary Information No E11.*]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I will move on to page 440 and the seventh line from the bottom, “Other Grants”. Could I please have a list of the grants funded under this line item? I also note that the amount in the forward estimates is \$145 000 less than the budget for 2018–19. I would be interested to know which grants are going to be reduced or discontinued?

Hon SUE ELLERY: In respect of child protection and family support, the grants I can advise you of are children’s honorariums; contribution for children wellbeing monitoring survey; family crisis program; and there are some other grants through ANROWS, which is a research clearing house, I think, for family and domestic violence; Kalgoorlie Earlier Intervention and Family Support program; the mobile clinic outreach team; and parent support and Best Beginnings. Then there are some grants that go to individuals and I do not have a list of those. There are also women’s grants.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Would it be possible to have the list of those grants plus the amounts associated with them tabled?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I cannot give you this because it is in a document with a lot of other things, but I am happy to provide it to you subsequently.

[Supplementary Information No E12.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: The sort of money that the grants made to individuals, could the minister give me some idea of the sorts of grants that individuals would ordinarily receive? I am trying to get an idea.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The information is not available to me here, but I can take that on notice.

The CHAIR: We will keep that as part of E12.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: I refer to page 419, specifically point 8, “Regulation and Support of the Early Education and Care Sector.” My question is: could the minister provide us with an outline of how the minister that she is representing is ensuring that early education and care services meet national quality standards? Specifically, could she address whether there are any challenges to those measures?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The work in this area is underpinned by a national quality agenda and the government is currently engaged in assessing what the impact of the commonwealth government withdrawing from that national partnership on national quality will mean. It is disappointing that there was no transition plan put in place to allow Western Australia to properly plan for the impact of that national partnership coming to an end. In their budget, the Australian government announced the completion of that national partnership agreement and it committed an additional \$40 million to the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, which is ACECQA, to support that ongoing work. That funding includes the previous contributions to the operating costs of ACECQA that were made by the states and territories, funding for the national quality agenda’s IT system and the 10 per cent fee revenue that was previously provided by the states. We had no prior knowledge that the commonwealth was going to do that. I am advised that here in Western Australia, there is currently analysis being undertaken to assess exactly what the impact of that withdrawal will have on the education and care regulatory unit here.

In terms of what Western Australia is doing, I might ask Mr Jolly to talk a little bit about the inspection regime that ensures quality is provided.

[5.00 pm]

Mr JOLLY: I thank the member for the question. The education and care regulatory unit is responsible for the regulation of the sector and the administration of the National Quality Framework here in Western Australia. The inspectors for that unit and the assessment officers undertake a program of assessment and rating for services that are approved to operate under the national law. Presently, about 92 per cent of eligible services have completed an initial assessment, and about two-thirds of those services that have been assessed and rated are either meeting or exceeding the national quality standard. In addition, the regulatory unit undertakes a visit to every approved service in Western Australia every year and some services receive more than one visit during the course of the year. In the course of conducting those visits, they will inspect aspects of the service that relate to minimum standards of operation—things like physical environment, staffing ratios and the like—to make sure that the services are compliant with those particular obligations. In addition to that, the unit provides a range of information supports to assist the sector to meet its obligation under the National Quality Framework. I should mention that the assessment and rating process itself involves one and sometimes two officers visiting a service for anything up to two days, depending on the size and location of the service, during which time they will observe the practice conducted in the service. At the conclusion of that process, they will compile a report

for that service that contains their observations against the elements of the national quality standards. That report is provided back to the service along with their final rating. The report is essentially a template for continuous improvement for each of those services, so it sets out quite clearly in relation each of the elements of each of the quality areas where the service was assessed and where the practice can be improved across the board.

Hon PIERRE YANG: A few questions have been asked about the Target 120 program and a range of specific questions have been answered. Can I please ask something a bit more general about the program? Can you please outline the Target 120 program? How is it different from other efforts to tackle juvenile crime?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I guess what it is trying to do is intervene before the point of detention is arrived at. Part of what it is trying to do as well is rather than treat the young person as an offender is look at the issues that increase the young person's likelihood of offending, whatever that range of issues might be. There could be a broad scope of them. The idea—Hon Alison Xamon referred to this earlier—is that a case management—caseworker approach would be taken. I guess it is based on the notion that one size fits all is not going to work and that you have to wrap the specific services that that particular young person needs around them. That is the essential of what makes the approach different. You will recall that the broad community debate that led to this was a debate about a small number of young people from a small number of families where the agencies, particularly police for example, were seeing intergenerational contact, and it was trying to really get to that. They are the toughest families to deal with—the most dysfunctional. A whole lot of work needs to be done throughout the spectrum, but if each agency was aware that there was this small cohort in Western Australia of this group of families and young people with in many cases intergenerational dysfunction, they could really try to stop that.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have a question about the clarity behind working with children checks, which are entirely under the jurisdiction of this minister. Have there been any changes to the working with children checks in the last couple of years, firstly, with regard to the requirements of the criteria for working with children and also the requirements?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There have been no legislative changes and the criteria are set out in the legislation. I will just check who I can get to respond to you about implementation. I am advised there has been a change of process in respect of online renewals. That is a new process.

Hon PETER COLLIER: You are right: because the criteria is legislated, you cannot diminish it. Are there no cracks in the system at all as a result of the online registry?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Not that I am advised.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is fine; I am comfortable with that. How often are they renewed? How often does someone have to renew their working with children check?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Again, I think that is either set out the regulations or the legislation, but I will check.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I think it is five years.

Hon ALISON XAMON: It is three.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is it three? I thought it was five.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am just going to see what I can find out for you.

Hon PETER COLLIER: When is it renewed and what is the process for renewal?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get Mr Jolly to describe the process while I see whether there is further information in that file.

Mr JOLLY: As the minister has mentioned, the process is online now, so people who already hold a working with children card simply go online to the working with children website and enter their card number and relevant details, and that essentially provides an identity verification. At that point, the record is moved through the system electronically through the Australian Crime Intelligence Commission and out to the various police jurisdictions, which conduct a criminal record check against that particular individual and, depending on the outcome of that record check, they will dictate whether or not the renewal is approved or a negative notice is issued.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Therefore, there is no possibility for someone who does not meet the criteria upon renewal to slip through the system. If they have met the criteria, but something has happened in the interim between the time that their working with children check is due for renewal; they cannot just get online and renew, can they? From what you have just told me, the criteria is just as vigilant there for renewal.

Mr JOLLY: Yes.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, so that is confirmed.

Mr JOLLY: Yes, as you have mentioned, it is because it is legislated. The online system matches the legislated requirements; that is correct.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is fine. So someone who has messed up or somehow does not meet the criteria in the interim cannot just go on and click a renewal; okay, that is good. You may need to take this on notice as there is often an issue with this, sorry. How many working with children cards do we have in Western Australia for the last five years? Have you got that? Also, do you have the number of applications that have been refused?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The number of people who have applied for and received a working with children card is 23 521. The number of negative notices is 169.

[5.10 pm]

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is that this year—currently?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am just trying to figure out what period of time that is for.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That cannot be right; I do not think it is 23 000.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think this is with respect to carers who have children in care. I might take your question on notice and make sure that we can get you an answer that is accurate.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Just the total number of working with children checks over those five years and also the number of applications that were refused.

[*Supplementary Information No E13.*]

Hon DIANE EVERS: My question is about the regional reform fund, and you might want to take it on notice. I have gone back to look at where those funds are shown to affect the services and I have added up all the other income in those services, and it equals the amount in the middle of page 439 where it shows all the income. I have added up all the services income and it equals your income on that page, which suggests the numbers show in income and referred to as from the regional reform fund are actually shown in “Income” and not “Income From State Government”. I am a little concerned that either those numbers are incorrectly shown in the table for services or that they are not where the regional reform fund is being used. I would like—like I said, it might be unnoticed—where that regional reform fund is shown in your income statement, because it does not seem to

match up with the royalties for regions that are shown there, and then what that regional reform fund will be used for.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I ask Mr Carran to provide you with an explanation.

Mr CARREN: If I could clarify the question. You are referring to page 425?

Hon DIANE EVERS: Yes, it is pages 425 to 427.

Mr CARREN: And you are referring to the income line and trying to see how that compares with the income statement?

Hon DIANE EVERS: Correct.

Mr CARREN: The explanation is that the income that appears on page 425 is partly related to the regional reform fund, but it also includes other income. The income and the comment talks about the increase in income is mainly due to increased payments from the regional reform fund, but it is not exclusively due to those movements.

Hon DIANE EVERS: That is fine. That then makes up part of the total on page 439 of \$1 420 475, which is shown as total income.

Mr CARREN: We are back to page 439?

Hon DIANE EVERS: Correct.

Mr CARREN: And the income from government?

Hon DIANE EVERS: No. If you look at “Income” and “Total Income”, the figure for 2018–19 is \$1.420475 billion. That adds up to the total of all those incomes in each of the services. That would suggest that what you are saying is that regional reform fund is taken into account in that section, possibly under “Grants and subsidies”.

Mr CARREN: All I can offer would be a reconciliation and that would be up to the minister, I suppose. I do not have something in front of me that does a complete reconciliation at all. What I will say is that when we finalise the budget, there are a whole lot of integrity checks that we go through to make sure that this agrees with that and everything correlates. You actually cannot submit the budget unless it is all agreed if that gives you any comfort or confidence. You have me intrigued now and I am going to go back and check it all myself.

Hon DIANE EVERS: If we could take that on notice then. A breakdown of the regional reform fund and exactly where it shows up in the income statement.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We can take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E14.]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I thought I might ask another question about Target 120. I would like to understand the breakdown of the \$20 million allocation across the estimates as it appears on page 415. Can I get a sense, please, of what money is actually funding and how much of it is dedicated to the creation of this bespoke database?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think for the database information I will need to take that on notice. I have a global figure but that does not tell me how much was spent on the database, so I will take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E15.]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I will not ask you, minister, to hazard a guess, because that is not going to be informative. I take it that the allocation refers to the creation of the database, presumably, the

administration of that database across the estimates, but presumably as well there is the human interaction, which is also being funded. Is that the appropriate assumption to make?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are a combination of things as I understand it. It is also drawing strongly on existing resources and just getting better joined up connections and better working together, but —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Not to interrupt your flow, minister, but is that joining up inside the Department of Communities or with other agencies—WAPOL and Education.

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, and beyond. You will remember a bit earlier on, I read out the list of agencies that will work together.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: What I am trying to actually appreciate is what we are just duplicating the funding of and what liabilities are we building into the system? I am a pro-data guy; I like the theory behind it, but I am concerned that a social policy initiative might be bogged down in the design of a bespoke IT solution and you might not actually deliver the kind of social dividend you want. That is a concern, which is why I want to know what the allocation is. I suppose what I am interested to know, as well, is on page 417 and the continuation of significant issues impacting the agency. It is the second dot point on page 417. The claim is the “database will be developed to evaluate and focus the initiative”, and I understand that “and calculate the social return on investment.” Does the calculation of the social return on investment relate to the \$20 million allocation for Target 120 or does that refer to funding for relevant services across WAPOL, Communities and Education that I will say is consumed by the Target 120 cohort?

Hon SUE ELLERY: My understanding of the principle of it is that it is the latter; that is, if this is about stopping those kids before they get into detention, it is the money that you save from not having them go into detention and needing all those additional services, for example. That is the principle of it.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I appreciate that intention. I just wanted to know what actually was being measured.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I just add this caveat as well: the model is still being developed, so it would not be accurate to say that we have in place exactly what the measurements will be and what all the various levers will be, because that modelling is being done now.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: What stage of progress is that up to? When, for example, will the database be operational?

[5.20 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: As in response to Hon Alison Xamon, we are anticipating around September.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: The calculation of the social return on investment or spending—is the government of the disposition to make public that information when it has aggregated enough data to be useful? It is one thing to say, “We want to measure our effectiveness”, but are you ever going to reveal the effectiveness of the measure?

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is a good question. It is not an unreasonable question to ask. I am not sure that a decision by government has been made about how we will report on its success. I will take that part of it of notice with the caveat that if it is the case, as I suspect, that government has not yet made a decision on that given we have not seen the model yet, it might be that I cannot give you an answer. But if we are able to, I will.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thanks, minister.

[*Supplementary Information No E16.*]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: The reason I think that would be useful—and there is no partisan motivation here—is that when you are presented with budget papers you are presented with budget papers, as you well know, of variable quality and quantity. It has exercised my mind—the non-uniform nature key effectiveness and efficiency indicators as they are reported by agencies across a range of portfolios, with the observation that a lot of it is measuring internal workflow, which you cannot use to measure the effectiveness of a service to a person. This is a plea more than a question. If government should make that decision to make that information public, it would be exceptionally useful to include that in the key effectiveness indicator component of future budget papers.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Noted.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I am a little bit concerned about—this is on pages 424 and 425—family support services in the earlier intervention and prevention area. We see that there are going to be 517 FTEs versus the 280 that are now going to be working in early prevention. Has consideration been given to reversing the FTE allocation so that earlier intervention can start straightaway?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Member, I can see where you got the 280 FTE but I cannot see where you got the 500 FTE.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: What we have here is early intervention and family support service with service 5, “Child Protection Assessments and Investigations”. I note that is approximately half less of the FTEs of 517 versus the 280 which are working in the preventative early intervention side.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Your question, as I understand it, is you are, I guess, saying that the proportion is the wrong way around, if I can paraphrase it that way.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I do not have any information to say that but we have all agreed that prevention and early intervention is so important. I am wondering whether there has been any consideration given to having more people in the early intervention area.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will make a general comment. Service 5 is at the pointy end of the business that the agency undertakes. That is the work that is done around assessing and investigating claims of abuse, neglect et cetera. You would not want to be skimping on allocating resources to that because it is literally about the safety of children and it is also about preparing for court so that you can get the right orders in place to protect the children. Is it the case that you could always do with more resources for early intervention? Of course. But I do not think in this allocation that the agency has got the priority the wrong way around. I do think that is an appropriately proportionate allocation of its resources.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I refer to budget paper No 2 volume 2, page 425 and the information there about 517 FTEs that work on the department’s fifth area of service, child protection assessments and investigations in 2018–19. Are a specified number of those 517 FTEs required to undertake child protection assessments?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The answer is that it is not possible for me to break that 517 down into a specific number that deal with assessments as opposed to investigations. It will be the case that there will be officers that do both so I am not sure that I can break it down. If there is something particular that you are looking for, I am happy to try to be more specific.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Some officers do investigations and assessments. Out of the 517, how many do both?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not in a position to give you an answer to that.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Ever?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is a flow of work that will involve people doing both components of assessment and investigation and that work being oversighted by other officers as well. It is not possible to break it down to you because it will change as well, I am advised, depending on how the work is allocated.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Are all 517 FTEs permitted to undertake assessments?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Assessing and investigating is not necessarily a static process. It may well be ongoing, depending on what the circumstances are. I cannot give you more specific information than that. If it would be helpful to the member, I am sure that the minister would be prepared to give him a briefing on how this part of the service delivery works so that you can get a better understanding of the workflow, if that is helpful to you.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is there a list of the job titles for these 517 FTEs.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised yes. Would you like a copy of it?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes. Will you table it?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not have it here but I am happy to take it on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E17.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Have the number of concerns reported to the department requiring assessment reduced in the past year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not have that information here, but I can take it on notice and see what we can provide you on that information to date, bearing in mind that it is reported in the annual report to the information I would be giving you would be “to date” as part way through the year.

[5.30 pm]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes, that would be helpful

[Supplementary Information No E18.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: In that table on page 425, minister, you will see that the 517 FTEs are 10 less than the budget from last year. What is the explanation for cutting those 10 FTEs from the budget?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Staff were reallocated into the central intake area to streamline the process for dealing with reports. As I am advised, it was a shift of resources into that central intake area to streamline the process.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The process is presumably now streamlined; therefore, it requires 10 less people to do the same amount of work?

Hon SUE ELLERY: As I am advised that 10 people were taken out of that area of work to put into the central service to streamline it to make it less work for those people at the other end of the process.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: But we do not know how many people there are, because I asked that earlier and nobody knew.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might ask Ms Tang if she can add to the answer.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Let us do that.

Ms TANG: As I said earlier, in July last year we set up the central intake system in the metropolitan area, which all intakes—all queries into the department—go through. We have 24 staff in that particular area and that has enabled us to implement a tool which provides a standardised approach to how we do assessments. It still requires a professional overlay on how those assessments are done, but it is much clearer on what the threshold is as to whether a child will come into care,

require a safety and wellbeing assessment, or whether it does not meet the threshold and therefore some other services may be referred. What we have found over the metropolitan area is that applying that standardised tool—and I am very clear that whilst it is a tool, you still need the professional oversight and advice around that tool as well. Not just anyone can come in and tick a box and come up with what the answer is. We have found that some metropolitan areas have had quite a higher threshold and others are quite low. We have been able to actually work with each of the districts who are not taking intakes in, to say, “We have a standardised way to do assessments. The resources that you might have in that particular district are actually not required here at the moment but they may be required in another area which has now shown that they may have a higher demand for intake.” The essential intake does not apply to the regional areas; not all calls come in from the regional areas, but we are rolling out the training related to that standard tool so when regional teams are working with families, they are applying a similar threshold.

We have also restructured across all our districts. That was commenced two years ago and has certainly come right to the end now of standardising our services whereby we have safety teams who are working at the front end of assessment and investigation so they are able to respond and work in a similar way to consider the factors of whether you would bring a child in immediately, whether a family requires support. Then we have care teams, which if a decision has been made to bring a child into care and that child is placed with family or placed with carers or maybe in residential care, they work on the long-term arrangements and particularly around permanency planning or reunification. The teams still work across each other, but they have defined roles. That way we have been able to be much more, as I said, streamlined in our approach. It is not that we are providing less assessments or less scrutiny; in fact, because we have specialised teams working in relation to safety and the front end, and particular skills around that, we are working in a different way with families as we are reunifying or supporting caring arrangements.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is it 24 FTE in the central intake system?

Ms TANG: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: And are they part of the 517 that we are talking about?

Ms TANG: I would suggest they are, yes, because they are doing assessment.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: All right. Do we need to check that? It either is or it is not. I am not that keen on a suggestion.

Ms TANG: We can check it for absolute accuracy. But they are doing the front end work as well.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will take it on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E19.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, on the following page 426, you will see that the number of FTEs under service item 7 has been cut from 625 to 613. What is the explanation for the 12 FTEs lost?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised that the answer to that question is that as a result of the machinery-of-government changes, a range of corporate support functions were no longer required and so that element has been taken out of the FTE of that service.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Do we have a list of what those 12 FTEs were doing previously that is no longer required?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will take it on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E20.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 443 and the eighth line item, “National Partnership Agreement on Pay Equity”. I was wanting to know how this funding was spent and why it has been discontinued, if indeed it belongs in here.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Is this Child Protection?

Hon ALISON XAMON: It is never clear, minister; that is why I ask it. If it belongs in another part of Communities, I just need to know, and which part, preferably.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The Fair Work Australia decision that was handed down as part of the final equal remuneration order in June 2012 resulted in significant pay increases for those workers who were covered by the federal SACS award. In 2013, the WA industrial commission mandated wage increases for workers covered by the crisis assistance and supported housing industry WA interim award 2011, in line with that federal award. The initial national partnership on pay equity for the SACS sector agreement commenced in July 2013 and expired on 30 June 2016. A new agreement has been reached between the state and commonwealth and that agreement is due to expire on 30 June 2019 under the same terms for the initial agreement. The national partnership provides funding for both homelessness and disability service programs. That is to pay for the pay increases.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Why has it been discontinued, or is that currently subject to additional negotiation with the federal government?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No; I am advised because the pay increases were staggered over a time. That has come to an end.

Hon ALISON XAMON: But the thing is that the money will still need to be found to continue with those pay increases at some point, so I am trying to figure out where the money is going to come from.

Hon SUE ELLERY: As I understand it, the increases have ceased. There is a new ongoing rate of pay, but the increases—you are going to get whatever it is, three per cent on 30 June and the next pay rise under that agreement is two per cent on 27 August. They have come to an end.

[5.40 pm]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to the twelfth line item on page 443 headed “Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors”. I was wanting to know how many unaccompanied humanitarian minors are currently in Western Australia and how does that compare with the 2016–17 year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised that there are currently four under the chief executive officer’s delegated guardianship. That is all the information that I have available to me here.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I take on notice how many there were in the 2016–17 year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am happy to take it on notice and if we have that information—if those children are known or were known in that financial year to the Department for Child Protection—we will provide it to you. I am just not sure that they will know that all those children were known to the Department for Child Protection.

Hon ALISON XAMON: In which case, that is still an answer.

[*Supplementary Information No E21.*]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” on page 421 and the seventh line item from the bottom, “Proportion of children in the CEO’s care with comprehensive care planning undertaken within set time frames”. What are the current required time frames?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The statutory time frame is, I am advised, 30 days for the care plan.

Hon ALISON XAMON: What is the longest that a child in the care of the CEO has gone without a comprehensive care plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If the question is “ever”, I am not sure that we can provide that answer.

Hon ALISON XAMON: No, I mean particularly in the last year.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will take it on notice and see what we are able to provide.

[Supplementary Information No E22.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: How many care plans were challenged by family members or advocates in 2016–17 and the 2017–18 year to date? If you do not have that available —

Hon SUE ELLERY: We would not have that here for 2016–17. This is about budget papers for 2018–19.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am trying to compare a trend.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You may well be. I am happy to take it on notice. If we are able to, we will provide it, but we would not have that information in the budget hearing for the 2018–19 year.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am fine with that.

[Supplementary Information No E23.]

The CHAIR: Thank you, members and thank you, minister. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript, within seven days of the hearing. If members have any unasked questions, I ask you to submit these via the electronic lodgement system on the POWAnet site by 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 27 June. Responses to these question and any questions taken on notice are due by 12 noon Friday, 13 July. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met.

Once again, I thank you for your attendance today.

Hearing concluded at 5.44 pm
