

**ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**2021-22 BUDGET ESTIMATES - ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

**Department of Communities**

**Hon James Hayward MLC asked:**

1. I refer to page 132 of BP3, line item on “Child Protection cost and demand updates” and I ask:
  - (a) How much of the \$55.9 million in 2024-25 will be spent on providing independent living facilities, and does the Minister have a view on whether it is better for children to live with foster families, or in independent living arrangements; and
  - (b) Does the \$55.9 million in 2024-25 include any funding for increased support and incentives for foster carers?

**Answer**

(a) – (b)

The additional Child Protection cost and demand funding for 2024-25, identified on page 133 of Budget Paper No. 3, is currently only budgeted at an expense category level. This includes, for example, spending on staff salaries, accommodation, grants and subsidy payments.

The allocation of spending to specific functions and placement types within those categories will be determined closer to 2024-25 when an appropriate mix of services is more reliably determined, based on annual parameter considerations and updates.

Decisions about placement arrangements are always made with the best interests of the child or young person as the paramount consideration, and the child or young person’s views and wishes are at the forefront of decision-making

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**Department of Communities**

**Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:**

1 I refer to child safety investigations undertaken by the Department, and I ask:

- (a) For the financial year 2020-21
  - (i) What was the appropriation actually spent on such investigations;
  - (ii) How many investigations were undertaken; and
  - (iii) How many investigations resulted in a decision substantiating the likelihood of emotional harm as a result of sexual abuse?
  
- (b) In the current financial year.
  - (i) What is the budgeted appropriation for such investigations,
  - (ii) How many investigations have been undertaken to-date; and
  - (iii) How many investigations undertaken to-date have resulted in a decision substantiating the likelihood of emotional harm as a result of sexual abuse?

**Answer**

Extracting the funding amount specifically spent on child safety investigations is not possible, because 'Child Protection Assessments and Investigations' refers to a Service Measure that covers a range of matters that contribute to or otherwise impact child safety investigations. As per the service summary on page 525 of Budget Paper 2:

*"Assessing concerns reported to the Department about the wellbeing of children and young people and responding appropriately, including child protection assessments, investigations, and making applications for court orders"*

- (a) For the financial year of 2020-21.
  - (i) The actual spend on Child Protection Assessments and Investigations was \$88,143,000.
  - (ii) 13,165
  - (iii) 418
  
- (b) In the current financial 2021-22 financial year:
  - (i) The budget for Child Protection Assessments and Investigations is \$109,139,000
  - (ii) Between 1 July 2021 and 30 September 2021, 3,138
  - (iii) 25



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**Hon James Hayward MLC asked:**

- 2 I refer to page 132 of BP3, line item on "Child Protection cost and demand updates" and I ask during the 2020-21 financial year, how many instances have been recorded where support workers have taken children home with them as no other accommodation options were available?

**Answer**

This information is not recorded centrally and would require manually reviewing all individual case files for each interaction. Gathering this data would require significant resources.

All child protection workers are screened to work with vulnerable children through the Department of Communities' screening processes in addition to holding a valid Working with Children Card.

*RMG*

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**Department of Communities**

**Hon James Hayward MLC asked:**

4. I refer to page 132 of BP3, "Pioneer Park Homelessness Response" and I ask:
- (a) Of the \$3.4 million spent in 2020-21, what was the money spent on and why;
  - (b) Considering the Government intervened in this case, will it also intervene in the future when similar situations arise anywhere in the state; and
  - (c) Of the people who were moved to alternative accommodation, which accommodation were they moved to and what was the cost per person per night on average?

**Answer**

- (a) Of the \$3,355,000 allocated to the Pioneer Park Homelessness Response for 2020-21 (rounded to \$3.4 million in the budget papers), a total of \$3,148,242 was expended and included:
  - \$2,458,411 for the Fremantle Housing Support Initiative (100 Hampton Road, Fremantle) and the Housing First Rapid Response (also known as the HEART Project).
  - \$689,831 for temporary accommodation, security, food and associated costs.
- (b) Over the next four years, The McGowan Government is delivering unprecedented investment, totalling \$2.5 billion, towards homelessness and social housing. This includes projects such as Boorloo Bidee Mia and the two Common Ground facilities.

Last year, the Department of Communities launched *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030* which is a whole-of-community plan, setting the direction for all levels of government, business and the community sector in responding to and preventing homelessness in Western Australia. This plan has been supported by the sector and different stakeholders and it is evidence based.

Any future response will be assessed on a case by case basis.

- (c) Individuals were accommodated at a range of accommodation options, including crisis accommodation and hotels. As a result, an average cost per person per night is not available.



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**Hon James Hayward MLC asked:**

- 5 I refer to page 132 of BP3, line item on "Child Protection cost and demand updates" and I ask
- (a) How much of the \$55.9 million in 2024-25 will be allocated to third party service providers, and
  - (b) What amount, percentage wise, is spent on admin at third party providers vs. actual support staff costs?

**Answer**

- (a) Currently, \$31.98 million has been notionally allocated for the provision of grants and subsidies services to third party service providers. This budget allocation will be confirmed closer to 2024-25, when an appropriate mix of services is reassessed, after consideration of the demand model's annual parameter updates.
- (b) Communities does not prescribe or record an administration cost percentage for third party service providers

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**Department of Communities**

**Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:**

8. I refer to comments made by the Hon Samantha Rowe during the Department's Hearing on the 20 October where she said that the Boorloo Bidee Mia facility must be, *"... scaled up through a gradual process. It has to be done with a view to maintaining appropriate safety, not just for the residents but also for the staff."*
- (a) Have any physical assaults been committed at the facility by residents;
  - (b) Of the assaults in (a), how many were committed:
    - (i) Towards a staff member;
    - (ii) Towards another resident
  - (c) Of those in (b), have the police been required to attend the facility to deal with any assaults;
  - (d) What is the procedure for dealing with an assault that is committed at the facility; and
  - (e) Will a resident who has committed the assault be removed from the facility?

**Answer**

(a) – (b)

Due to privacy and confidentiality reasons, details of individual incidents at Boorloo Bidee Mia cannot be provided.

The safety and wellbeing of staff and residents remains a priority at all times. Boorloo Bidee Mia is specifically designed as a low barrier homelessness service, meaning some residents will display challenging behaviours linked to trauma, mental health or drug and alcohol addiction.

Staff are trained to understand and work safely with behavioural challenges, including proactive approaches to therapeutic crisis intervention, preventing escalation, and de-escalating where possible.

(c)

Staff at Boorloo Bidee Mia engage with WA Police Force when required and have a close working relationship.

(d)

Boorloo Bidee Mia has an emergency response procedure in place to appropriately manage incidents should they occur. In addition, individual support and safety plans are developed with residents.

(e)

Exiting a resident is a measure of last resort and incidents are considered on a case by case basis, as evidenced by one resident having been asked to leave due to behaviour.

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**Department of Communities  
Hon Steve Martin MLC asked:**

9. I refer to Budget Paper No. 2, vol. 2, page 516, paragraph 6.2.

- (a) Does the recently opened Boorloo Bidee Mia facility keep a record of the number of people who stay at the facility each night;
  - (i) If yes to (a), how many individual people in total have stayed at the facility since its opening;
  - (ii) If yes to (a), will the department please table how many individual people have stayed at the facility each night since its opening;
  - (iii) If no to (a), why is this data not collected – particularly in light of COVID-19 regulations; and
- (b) When is the facility expected to be fully operational?

**Answer**

(a) Yes.

- (i) - (ii) Boorloo Bidee Mia differs from a 'walk-in' or 'drop-in' shelter model, as it provides longer-term accommodation together with individualised, wraparound supports to aid transition into permanent, stable living arrangements.

Since commencing, a total of 30 referrals to Boorloo Bidee Mia have been assessed. Six individuals declined this offer for various reasons, so the facility has supported 24 individuals.

As at 16 November 2021, there were 21 residents at Boorloo Bidee Mia. Two individuals have transitioned to public housing, and one individual was exited due to behaviour.

A further three individuals are expected to move in by the end of the week.

- (iii) Not applicable.

- (b) While currently operational and servicing clients, Boorloo Bidee Mia is still undergoing minor building works to enable full-service capacity. The occupation of the service was always planned to be a gradual process and individuals will be selected carefully to ensure the right mix of people are engaged, and the safety and wellbeing of all residents and staff is prioritised throughout.



The total number of residents accommodated at Boorloo Bidee Mia at any given time will be dependent on the support needs of residents, with the delivery of a safe, culturally appropriate and effective service being a priority at all times. The service will continue to expand its capacity in coming months.

To ensure this model is appropriately managed, the referral process for Boorloo Bidee Mia is led by a group of service providers and agencies, working collaboratively as the HEART Homelessness Integrated Action Group, which identifies and refers appropriate candidates.

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