

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2014–15 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 11 JUNE 2014**

**SESSION FOUR
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT**

Members

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)
Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Rick Mazza**

Hearing commenced at 7.02 pm

Hon HELEN MORTON

Minister for Child Protection, examined:

Ms EMMA WHITE

Acting Director General, examined:

Ms KAY BENHAM

Executive Director, Policy and Learning, examined:

Mr PETER BYRNE

Executive Director, Community and Business Services, examined:

Mrs PHILIPPA BEAMISH BURTON

Director, Finance, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Firstly, if I can ask the witnesses if they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Witnesses need to be aware of the severe penalties that apply to persons providing false or misleading testimony to a parliamentary committee. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private, either of its own motion or at a witness's request. 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 answering the question. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values your assistance with this.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: I invite members to indicate if they have any questions.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I refer to the table under the heading on page 419, "Services and Key Efficiency Indicators", and particularly the line item on employees or FTEs. I am keen to get a sense of how many staff at the agency have been affected by the government's hiring freeze at the moment. Can the minister let me know what positions at what locations have been frozen? I am happy to take the answer by way of supplementary information if that is easier.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Is the member asking for the number of vacancies that have been frozen and have not been filled?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We will take that question on notice.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can you also let me know which positions at what locations have not been backfilled due to the substantive worker being on leave, whether it be long service leave or sick leave? Can you give me information as at 1 June? That information is separate to the hire and freeze information and refers to the positions that have not been backfilled because the person in the substantive position is on sick leave or extended leave.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Is that from 1 June up to date?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No D1.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: On the same theme, I am keen to get a sense how many staff at your agency go on stress leave. Obviously, it is a very trying area to work in. By way of supplementary information, how many staff took stress leave during 2010–11, 2011–12, 2012–13 and this year in 2013–14?

[Supplementary Information No D2]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: On the same issue, and perhaps one of the minister's advisers may be able to answer this question, has the agency directed any staff to take annual leave in this calendar year to reduce the leave liability of the department and, if so, how many staff have been directed to take leave and what offices do they work in?

Ms White: I can answer the question in part. We have not directed any staff to take leave. We have required staff as part of our leave liability management to submit a leave plan, particularly those who have large amounts of leave outstanding. These plans are lodged and monitored through an electronic leave management system. That goes some way to answering the member's question. In terms of the numbers, we would have to take that part of the question on notice.

Hon HELEN MORTON: What is the second part of the question that we are taking on notice? Nobody has been directed to take leave so that answer is zero.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is correct. The second part of my question asked if people had been told to take leave, what location were they at?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The answer to that is zero.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is fine. In relation to the answer then given, if the department is monitoring these leave plans, how is it tracking them? Are staff able to take the leave that they say they plan to take, because obviously it is a difficult area?

Ms White: There are a couple of mechanisms by which we do this. People's line managers are first and foremost responsible for working with each individual staff member on their plan, monitoring that plan, and then at an aggregate level by district or work unit they are required to provide a monthly report up through our corporate executive, and we look at those as an executive each quarter. Because it is all done electronically, the monitoring can be pulled up by both employee and the HR department at any time.

[7.10 pm]

The CHAIR: Just to be clear, is there any information to be taken on notice out of all of that exchange?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In relation to my question, no. I am happy with that answer.

On the same reference—employees essentially on page 419—can the minister give me a sense of what proportion of FTEs across the department's three service areas by service area are actually caseworkers or you would refer to as caseworkers?

Hon HELEN MORTON: This information is provided by district and work unit, but I think you asked for each of the service areas. Are you happy to take it by district?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We will give it to you on notice.

Ms White: It is a long list.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am happy to take that by way of supplementary information.

[Supplementary Information No D3.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, are you able to tell me how many family resource employees are currently employed by the department? So, how many were employed in 2013–14 and how many will be employed in 2014–15?

Hon HELEN MORTON: You will have to get that on notice.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am not trying to be tricky.

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is not tricky; it is just that that is a level of detail that you would not normally carry around for these sorts of hearings.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can I take that by way of supplementary information?

[Supplementary Information No D4.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, hopefully, this is an easier one. As of today on the most recent figures you have, what are we up to in relation to the numbers of children who are currently in the care of the CEO? I will probably ask a few of them and then you can answer them at the same time. Of those children in the care of the CEO, how many are Aboriginal? How many of the children in care at the moment are identified as having complex needs and challenging behaviours? How many of those Aboriginal children in care also are identified as having complex needs and behaviours?

Ms White: I think it is useful to start by saying that all children who come into the care of the department have suffered some level of trauma and have some level of co-occurring particular needs to do with their circumstances from which they have come. In terms of high and complex —

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Sorry; I do not mean to trivialise.

Ms White: Sure. How we define that in the department is really around placement type, so it would be perhaps useful to provide information about how many young people are in particular placement streams, but I will just start with the numbers that you have asked for to give the total. The total number of children in care at the end of March is 4 223 children. Of those children, there are 2 117 who are Aboriginal children in care. Of those children I have touched on, nine per cent of the total number of children in care are in our residential facilities, and that does give some indication about the percentage of those children who in fact require different and specialist needs outside of what a general foster care placement can offer. We do have 218 children in our specialist and high-needs placement options and they really are starting to be at the quite extreme end, I suppose, of some of those more difficult behaviours, more complex needs and co-occurring needs such as health, disability, mental health and self-harming behaviours, and often need quite individualised and specialist care plans wrapped around them in particular.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Of those 218 children you mentioned in specialist or high care, are they all in a facility run by the department or are some of those housed in NGO-run facilities or foster care placements?

Ms White: Of those 218, they are mostly with community sector agencies that we contract to provide that specialist care. The nine per cent of the 4 211 children in care are in those residential facilities, some of which are run by the department in a staff model and some are family group homes run by the community services sector. There are four children in each of those facilities.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, how many children live in department-run facilities at this stage? While you are looking, acting DG, how many children are in department-run facilities and can you give me a sense of where those facilities are located, as in regional versus metropolitan?

Ms White: In the metropolitan area—again, the figures are from 31 May—there were 50 children and they were in a range of group homes across the metropolitan area. Do you want me to list the particular suburbs?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Are there lots?

Ms White: It is quite a list.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can we table it? Whichever. If you want to read it, it is fine. I am particularly interested in the regional ones.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Do you just want the regional ones read out?

The CHAIR: Is it a document that can be tabled?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am not sure.

Ms White: In our country residential facilities, we have 46 children across those residencies and they are in Broome, Bunbury, Geraldton, Halls Creek, Port Hedland—in fact, it is more accurate to say South Hedland—Kalgoorlie, Kununurra and Roebourne. We also have a total of 68 children in family group homes which are run by the community services sector and they are located in Australind, Collie, Albany, Kununurra, Merredin, Wyndham, Newman, three in Broome, Kalgoorlie, Carnarvon, two in Geraldton and one in Meekatharra.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, does the department have a facility in the town of Laverton?

Hon HELEN MORTON: No.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I understand that some time ago, under the last minister, a commitment was made by government that a facility would be established in Laverton—I think it was a short-stay facility—but also that there would be extra child protection workers placed in town. Can anybody tell me if that facility was indeed established and also how many child protection workers actually staff the office in Laverton?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Either you have put a question forward but you have not asked it yet or it was one that has been put forward and asked.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It has not been answered yet.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The answer is that there was one talked about; however, it was explored and considered not viable to provide a service in that community on the basis of the demand not being sufficient.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, I did think that the commitment was made based on a perceived need in the first place and perhaps community concern, but you are saying that some work was done since then and it was decided it was not needed.

[7.20 pm]

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is right.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: If I can move on to page 418 “Outcomes and Key Efficiency Indicators” and the point in relation to improved safety. I want to ask about substantiations of harm. Minister, can you or one of your advisers advise me how many reports were taken by DCP in each of 2011–12, 2012–13 and this year to date? I want to get a sense of whether we actually getting more reports of harm and whether those cases are being substantiated.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Last two years?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The last two years and then this year so far, please.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We will have to take that on notice, we have not got last year's.

[*Supplementary Information No D5.*]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The minister may want to take this on notice, too. I am interested for the same periods to find out how many were re-reports or re-substantiations, if that is available, too. First it was initial reports, but if I can have the figures on re-reports or re-substantiations as well.

The CHAIR: Are we happy to make that all part of D5 then, so the whole lot is just one complete package?

Hon HELEN MORTON: You still want that of the last two years, do you not?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: If I can, just to get a sense over time how we are tracking. Minister, excuse me but on the previous question I asked about the numbers of children in care. I forgot one point and one question, so I would not mind if I could ask that now. The acting DG gave figures about the numbers of children in care, so 4 223 you said was the figure at the end of May of the total number of children in care and 2 117 was the number of Aboriginal children in care. We are now over the 50 per cent mark, and I do not think we were last year, in relation to the numbers of Aboriginal children in care. What strategies is the department using or have you got a new program or something to help stop the higher numbers of Aboriginal children coming into care?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Because I will be using this in a speech on Friday, I know that the rate of Aboriginal children is actually reducing. That does not mean to say that the numbers are not increasing or that there are not more children coming into care, but the rate of Aboriginal children —

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So they are reducing as a proportion of the total number.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Of the growth, yes.

Ms White: There is a range of things we are doing deliberately and assertively to address the high numbers of Aboriginal children in care. The member has pointed out that it is a new space we find ourselves in terms of the particular number. We work very closely with each and every family through the implementation of our Signs of Safety framework, which we have been implementing since 2008, whereby we work earlier and more intensively with, not just the immediate family, but the extended family and naturally occurring networks around that child, and we work specifically through that network to promote the safety of the child. We are finding quite a lot of success in that, which is promising. We have established Aboriginal practice networks in each of our 17 districts, which in leadership positions provide specific and high-level advice to caseworkers. They also are conduits to extended family and the community in terms of planning other people and other advice to really promote and support the family to meet their safety goals to keep the child in the family. It would be useful, probably, to point out that 70 per cent of the Aboriginal children in our care are placed with direct relatives through our relative care program. Because the children come from those families and those relative carers are by definition competent and strong, they also, with our support, play quite a mentoring role at times with the parents and become part of the overall support plan with the goal to return the children home.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, on the same issue, how are we tracking in relation to the numbers of Aboriginal staff that the agency employs? Can you give me a sense of how many we had in 2012–13 and how many we have this year in 2013–14?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Just under 10 per cent of the staff are workers with an Aboriginal background and that is just a very slight decrease from the previous year.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I understand, minister, particularly, perhaps it is group homes—I think, in my own past there have been a number of Aboriginal staff who have left the agency. Not that you have to have Aboriginal staff to work with Aboriginal people by any means, but it does concern me that we do not seem to be keeping our Aboriginal staff in the agency. You say that

the decrease has been small, so maybe it is just anecdotal, but what are we doing to ensure that we do keep Aboriginal staff tracked and retained?

Ms White: Our Aboriginal services framework and Aboriginal employment and learning strategy really captures a range of strategies that we have in place. Our focus on learning is one of our key retention strategies and that happens around the individual staff member, so when they first commence with the agency, obviously there is a range of mandated training to equip them to do the job at hand, but we also offer diploma programs, which give you entrance into university and connect new Aboriginal staff. With all Aboriginal staff, we find that the more recent recruits take this up with other mentors across the agency. The Aboriginal practice leader in each of those districts plays a natural mentoring and lead role, in fact, as part of their work program to really connect directly with the Aboriginal staff, but also to support non-Aboriginal staff to work well with Aboriginal families and also look at learning opportunities within the districts, so it becomes a safe and interesting place to work. We work very hard through direct supervision and annual reviews about any particular personal professional issues that Aboriginal staff may be facing. You would appreciate that Aboriginal staff often have a number of competing priorities to do with their role in the community, but also in terms of the very hard and difficult work that they perform as child protection staff. That is something that we are quite overt about. As I mentioned, supervision, annual reviews. We have monthly learning networks, we call them, where issues that may impact on people's retention—it could be stress, it could be finding particular aspects of the work challenging—and we would focus learning events and peer discussion on those, and we find that to be quite successful.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: On the same issue, cross-cultural training—do we provide cross-cultural training to other staff members in the agency to engage with staff who identify as Aboriginal, but also people who actually work with children who are Aboriginal? What is the agency doing in those respects?

[7.30 pm]

Ms White: We have two key modes in this area. All staff who commence with the department undergo training, regardless of whether they are residential care workers or district staff—in fact, staff in our corporate area undergo training or a component or module of that. Depending on their role and where they are, it could be a more advanced module than others. There are different modules that staff can access. Staff participate in that very early in their appointment. As a learning organisation, we expect all staff to participate in ongoing learning. We have online learning modules and interactive sites, particularly around cross-cultural content, and discussion and ongoing learning, as I mentioned. It is not only online but also in our learning and development centre where staff, after they have done their first and mandated training, can connect in an ongoing sense. The other thing to point out, which I did not earlier, was about the Aboriginal practice network and cultural learning networks that happen in the district. That is more of a local learning strategy, and the expectation is that is occurring monthly. There are a couple of layers to it, if that is helpful.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Earlier, the acting director general mentioned the science of safety approach and that more children were being assessed using this approach. Is it the case that every child coming into the department's care is assessed using the signs of safety model; and, if not, how many are?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Again, I ask Emma White to speak on that.

Ms White: Signs of safety is a framework that underpins all the activities that we undertake with families in the community. It is a set of principles, disciplines, tools and processes. That is important. In answering the question whether we assess using signs of safety, it is an overall approach. The expectation is that each and every family or young person who comes into contact with the department will be met with that approach. In assessing safety concerns for children, the

expectation is that what we call a mapping—a tool of signs of safety—is undertaken where possible in every circumstance. Each circumstance is a little different. Sometimes we work with the entire family and sometimes we work more specifically with a member, so it would depend on the circumstance. But certainly that overall approach is used in every area of our work, and the tools and process are adopted in accordance with the presenting problem in our role as a department and ongoing assessment.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will focus for a few minutes on the spending changing on page 415. Could we look first of all at the third line down, “2014–15 Procurement Savings” of \$2.8 million. How is it anticipated that those savings will be made?

Ms White: The department has achieved those savings through changes and streamlining of staff travel, communications systems, general services contracts and non-critical equipment, all in the non-service delivery area. We found that travel in particular, with the implementation of our videoconferencing services across the state, has reduced considerably the cost of staff travelling to access training and other activities not only from country into Perth but also between and within country districts. For example, we have three offices across the west Kimberley, and instead of travelling into Broome repeatedly from Fitzroy or Derby, people are linking up by videoconferencing.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is for professional development purposes and not for servicing clients?

Ms White: It can be both. As you would appreciate, the families and children we work with are often highly mobile and case workers may be in one location and the family is accessing an office in other area. We can do all that by videoconferencing. It is an aspect of both, and as staff do less travel, they have more time in the office for the direct work they do.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Does that mean that a child protection officer working in, say, Fitzroy might have a family in Bidyadanga and they would not see them as it would all be done by videoconferencing? I am not sure what you mean by videoconferencing, which seems to involve quite a high level of technology and I imagine that the department might have it, but I am not so sure about the families.

Ms White: To answer your question, member, it is both. The expectation will always be that we connect directly with families, but using your example of Fitzroy and Bidyadanga, we have a full-time worker in Bidyadanga —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I was only using it as an example.

Ms White: Sure. It is absolutely both.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can I clarify that we would not have a family at one end of the videoconference and child worker at the other end, and the family does not have somebody with them.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Could the minister explain that further?

Hon HELEN MORTON: On the basis of the way in which Hon Sally Talbot was asking the question, I wanted to make it clear that we would not have a family at one end of a video conference and a child worker at the other end, and that that family would somehow or other be linked without a worker with them.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So there has to be a child protection officer there. How would that be done in the case of a community where there was not a child protection officer located? Remember, minister, this has all been given to us in the context of saving money by stopping child protection officers travelling.

[Hon Peter Katsambanis took the chair.]

Hon HELEN MORTON: The answer is that they would make a personal visit.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The department is not using videoconferencing to keep in touch with client families?

Mr N.W. MORTON: Not on every occasion; and where there is not a child protection worker where the family is located, they would visit.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In the case of Fitzroy Crossing, if the case manager was in the Fitzroy Crossing office and could not get across to, say, Beagle Bay or somewhere else that does not have a full-time worker, would a staff member go from Broome to Bidadanga to Beagle Bay to be there while the videoconference happens with the case manager in Fitzroy Crossing—if that makes sense?

Hon HELEN MORTON: These savings are mostly related to training. The level of saving that would be related to interviews with family would occur where there is a child protection worker at both places. We would not have a family on their own in that situation.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Ms White referred to savings in the non-service delivery area. Is any maintenance being deferred in 2014–15 to contribute to these savings?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am informed that certainly not for residential services, but maybe in-office accommodation.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can the minister give me the same breakdown for the \$1.335 million saved in 2013–14 procurement savings, which is the first line under “Spending Changes”. Also, the estimated actual is \$1.3 million, but what was the budget estimate? Did the department meet the budget estimate from 2013–14? Shall I say it again? I am getting a puzzled look.

[7.40 pm]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: If you could give the minister an opportunity. There has been a series of questions and the minister has not actually responded. Give the minister an opportunity to respond to the question.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I was picking up a glance from the left.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I am not an expert on nuances or glances, and neither is Hansard. If you give the minister the opportunity to respond verbally, you can then ask lots of follow-up questions. A series of questions where there are no answers that can be recorded on the record are of very limited use to anybody. Just give the minister the opportunity to answer the questions that have already been asked, please.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The 2013–14 procurement savings were found from a freeze on procurement spending. It has been applied to staff travel, equipment repairs and maintenance, communication, general services, and contracts and consumables.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: My second question was —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Have we actually reached target on the other ones?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The difficulty with answering that is of course we are not at the end of the financial year yet.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: What was the budget estimate for procurement savings in 2013–14?

Mr Byrne: That measure for 2013–14 was implemented at the midyear review in November. There was not a budget estimate at the commencement of the year. That was effectively what we had removed from our budget. We were required to come up with strategies to meet that target.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That was the target, \$1.335 million?

Mr Byrne: Yes.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Just before we move off that, was there any maintenance deferred in 2013–14—that first line item?

Mr Byrne: Yes. There were certainly equipment repairs. We have a rolling maintenance program that we deferred for office accommodation only, not for the residential care.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: May I keep going through the officer, minister? What do you mean equipment repairs? Are you talking about vehicles or IT?

Mr Byrne: No, it would not be vehicle repairs. They are through the government fleet. It can be IT replacement; delaying, for example, replacement of desktop computers and so on. We have rolling furniture replacement in some districts where we would go out and ascertain whether anyone does have a need to replace furniture. We just effectively do not go out that year.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: While we are talking about IT, the paragraph at the bottom of page 420 talks about the ICT replacement program. Is there a line item in this year's procurement savings that affects the ICT replacement program? Do you see the paragraph I am referring to?

Mr Byrne: That line item is in relation to capital funding, the \$1.15 million. We also have a component of expensed capital and recurrent funding. We may use that to meet the procurement savings as opposed to the capital. That is the IT replacement from a capital perspective.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So the procurement savings can be both capital and recurrent? That is a question.

Mr Byrne: Okay. The procurement savings were in relation to our recurrent program, not capital.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The next line item down is tariffs, fees and charges. Can you tell us what that \$1.9 million is allocated to? What are the full details of that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The tariffs, fees and charges: the changes in this area relate to after the annual review of tariffs, fees and charges for 2014–15, which included an assessment of the current cost recovery being achieved by each of the department's tariffs, fees and charges. Following the review, the government has approved the following fee increases effective from 1 July: a 25 per cent increase for adoption services; a 48 per cent increase for working with children checks for paid persons—Treasury prescribes CPI increases for working with children checks for volunteers and replacement cards; CPI increases for hire of the Mirrabooka community centre and the Port Kennedy Beach Camp facilities. The issues about that were the department had not changed those fees and charges for a number of years. The level to which the government was subsidising those fees and charges was substantial. Even in increasing these fees and charges they are considerably less than what is being applied in other states at this stage.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The fact that it stays constantly at \$1.923 million in the out years, does that mean you are not going to make any CPI adjustments in the out years? Several of those items you just mentioned were due to CPI.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Of course that figure relates to the review that is taking place at the moment. But each year, there is an annual review of fees and charges. The out years could increase as a result of that annual review.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: You just have not built in any CPI increases?

Hon HELEN MORTON: We have not done the review at this stage.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I see what you are saying.

I refer to the \$500 000 for the "Busselton Women's Refuge", which is two lines down from there. I know we are not looking at last year's budget, but there was a figure of \$480 000 in last year's budget which has not been expended, I think. We are now talking about \$500 000. Can you first of

all talk about the \$500 000; does that replace last year's budget estimate of \$480 000 or is it in addition to that? I cannot see how it is in addition because the \$480 000 does not show as being the estimated actual in 2013–14.

Ms White: The \$500 000 is in fact in addition to the numbers that you have spoken on. The underspend that you have indicated, or those unspent funds, went to extending the original grant that was put in place to start the refuge through the Busselton shire. Because the original site that was purchased by Housing for the refuge was deemed unsuitable, we went to an alternative property which was less expensive. However, we redirected some of those moneys to include outreach services which were in line with all the other refuge and family and domestic violence providers in the metropolitan area. There is a grant in place and we would look to, at the end of 12 months, review that before we would establish an ongoing service agreement, hence why we have not put the figures in the out years.

[7.50 pm]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is there no ongoing service agreement with the Busselton Women's Refuge at the moment?

Ms White: At the moment we are in a grant agreement, with plans in place, as per our usual process, to review the service. It is still in its early months of operation, so we review the service, as we do in all other circumstances, as we seek to then implement a service agreement.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I do not understand —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon Sally Talbot, a number of members want to ask questions.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will just finish on this one.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will let you finish on this question and then we will need to move on. I am sure we will get the opportunity to come back at a later stage.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: May I just query why the estimated actual for 2013–14 is blank—zero?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The recurrent funding for this service is in the base level of funding for the department. This is additional funding that is estimated to be required but it will be reviewed at the end of this year to determine what the ongoing amount is going to be.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is the \$500 000?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The \$500 000 is over and above the recurrent funding.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So you are saying there was no extra funding in 2013–14?

Hon HELEN MORTON: That was the year it started.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: You were going to spend \$480 000.

Hon HELEN MORTON: In 2012–13, we allocated \$240 000, and \$480 000 in 2013–14 for the provision of that service. We entered into a 12-month grant agreement with the City of Busselton, so it was only for 12 months, for the provision of the service, with the original grant term being from 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014. The City of Busselton has subcontracted the provision of the service to the Busselton Women's Refuge through the memorandum of understanding. In June 2013, the property acquired by the Department of Housing for the refuge was assessed as unsuitable, as was indicated. Following improvements and alterations to the property, the refuge commenced operating in late February 2014 after we purchased this new place at Marine Terrace. The grant agreement with the City of Busselton for the provision of the Busselton Women's Refuge has been extended to 31 December. It is a grant that has been made to the City of Busselton until December 2014. The new facility is considerably smaller than the original facility. The funding of \$70 000 has been retained, despite the smaller size, but will cover the extended period to 31 December 2014 and include provision of brokerage and outreach. In order to continue this

service, there has been a further commitment of \$500 000 for the period 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2015 through the ERC.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I will just ask a couple of questions and then hand over to the next member. All of us are really keen to find out more about this budget. I am struggling with a bit of lack of detail. I was looking for the line item for the Busselton refuge. I saw it in “Spending Changes” but then you do not see it anywhere else. I think that is part of the problem—finding out what the detail is in this budget. I will not go on about that. Are there any other new refuges that are funded in this budget?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am sorry; I was conferring.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Are there any other new shelters or refuges in this budget?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Apart from Busselton?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Apart from Busselton.

Mr Byrne: There was the election commitment for the refuge that appeared in last year’s forward estimates, so that will now be within our base, so there are no additional funds coming on besides the additional funding for the Busselton one this year.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: So just Busselton. So there are no new refuges for large families?

Hon HELEN MORTON: There was an election commitment from last year. That funding is in our base but the facility is yet to be developed.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: So there is funding for one more but you do not have a line item for it?

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is over and above the Busselton facility. There is a new women’s refuge for families that is already funded and is yet to come into play. It will be based in Ellenbrook. The funding for it was built into the base budget last year. It was a new item last year. It has not been built or acquired yet.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: When do you intend to have that refuge available? When are you progressing that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is currently being looked at with Housing. We have an anticipation date of 2015 but we do not have an actual date at this stage. Work is being undertaken in conjunction with Housing at the moment.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Do you know how many families it will be able to shelter?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I cannot remember exactly how many families but it is definitely being built to accommodate women with larger families, as is a third initiative, which is taking place at the moment, and that is the Wooree Miya large family centre being progressed out in Kenwick. That is making use of an existing service—moving it out to Kenwick, plus extending it further.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Great. That is good news.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon Alanna Clohesy, did you have any supplementary questions on this issue?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes. The Ellenbrook refuge; you are not able to give us a commencement date for that yet?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Other than it is 2015.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is that the \$2 million that was the line item under new works in last year’s budget?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Where is the line item for the Kenwick one?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The work around that is undertaken by Housing. It will be an item that is being progressed with Housing.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: In estimates last year you talked about the Kenwick refuge being the new refuge—the \$2 million refuge—but nothing about Ellenbrook. When was the decision made?

Hon HELEN MORTON: We might not have known that it was going to be in Ellenbrook at that stage.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: When was the Ellenbrook decision made? I have the transcript.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I seriously do not know when that decision was made. It has been something that has been progressed for at least 12 months. I do not know why it was not in discussion last time. It might have been too early at that stage for us to be clear and sure about that.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The \$2 million election commitment is a refuge for large families to be built in Ellenbrook. That is the \$2 million election commitment. It is very confusing.

Hon HELEN MORTON: In terms of large families, I want to be clear about that. It is for women and children?

Ms White: Correct.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The facility that is being built out at Kenwick is exceptional in terms of its ability to manage people with large families. I would like to ask Emma White to make some additional comments about that.

[8.00 pm]

Ms White: The facility being built and developed in Ellenbrook is, in fact, the preferred model for any new refuge that we may have into the future as a cluster model, a unit-style accommodation, where in fact we can be more flexible depending on the needs of the particular woman and how many children she may or may not have.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is that \$2 million Ellenbrook cluster model part of the election commitment from the last election?

Ms White: Correct.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Where is the second cluster-style model from the election commitment from the last election?

Hon HELEN MORTON: That has not been determined yet

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So there is no second refuge?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Right at this stage, one year into this government, we actually do not have the second location sorted.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: And there is nothing in the forward estimates for the second?

Hon HELEN MORTON: At this stage, until it is determined in terms of its timing, when it is going to hit the deck, you will not see it in the forward estimates until we know the timing.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon Lynn MacLaren has the call.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Are there any plans for refuges for young people—that is, the other needs group that has been identified as needing a refuge, so is there anything in train for young people?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Are you referring to at-risk young people who are not specific to crisis accommodation?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Yes, at-risk young people.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Is that what you are talking about?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I am talking about adolescents, young people who are finding difficulty in finding shelter, homeless young people.

Hon HELEN MORTON: But who do not necessarily need a refuge, is what you are saying? This is just at-risk accommodation.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: No, I am talking about homeless young people.

Hon HELEN MORTON: At-risk accommodation.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I have quite a lot to tell you on this.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, will it be through you or through Ms White?

Hon HELEN MORTON: It will be through Emma White.

Ms White: The department has an at-risk youth strategy that really does capture both our initiatives, our services, our funded programs, the collection of things that we provide to support young people at risk, specifically to do with accommodation. I should say that in terms of the youth at-risk services that we fund, there are 45 services across the state—\$5.27 million in 2013–14. Those particular services are based on outreach, diversion, intensive case management, to the point where the young person is at risk, but to prevent, if I understand the member's interest, the actual homelessness. We have funded—the government has funded—and we have established the Oxford Foyer program as an example, based in Leederville. You would be familiar with it—98 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 can be accommodated. Again intensive case management programs are offered in connection to education and employment. We have housing support workers in place that we fund through community services sector, supporting specifically young woman and young parents who are homeless or, in fact, are at risk of being homeless. There are 24 services statewide through the national agreement on the NAHA programs, housing programs around youth accommodation—that is, 95 crisis beds and 183 transitional accommodation beds, and some of those are within that Foyer. There are also youth programs that are funded that are really around counselling, advocacy, financial support at points of crisis; so in combination. I think that best describes or answers your question around what we have in place for those at-risk youth, specifically the accommodation programs.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: That is very helpful. Thank you. I am concerned—and the minister would know well—about transgender and queer youth who find it difficult to find homelessness services. We recognise there is an unmet need there. Is there anything in this budget that helps to address that unmet need?

Ms White: Our expectation and partnership work with the community services sector in contracting and establishing youth services, and in particular youth accommodation services, is that they can provide and connect with diverse sexualities, particular needs of young people, recognising the diversity. Now for some, that may mean on a case-by-case basis, if a young person of transgender or queer, you know, identifies in that particular way, may have some needs around privacy et cetera, that is dealt with case by case. But, in fact, it is the expectation and part of our service agreements, part of our contracting, that in fact all facilities, all youth services, both consider and cater for the needs of the range of particular issues faced by youth and particularly diverse sexualities.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Thank you. I had a question on another tack. I will let you off the hook there. That is obviously an ongoing issue for us. The hardship utility grants scheme—I note that in answer to a question on notice you advised me that the recurrent allocation to HUGS is \$4.07 million a year. Is that continuing into the forward estimates?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Where do I find that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is just part of the base budget, so you do not actually see it as a line item anywhere. What you see as a line item in the “Spending Changes” is the increase.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I note the increase of \$7.8 million in the spending changes. Are you anticipating an increase in HUGS’ applications due to certain changes that we are aware of in the federal government sphere which will reduce welfare payments, for example, and put some of our most disadvantaged or low income people at further risk, or further vulnerability? I know that the federal budget has only come out recently, but are you anticipating that the HUGS demand will climb?

Hon HELEN MORTON: As I said, the \$4.06 million is part of the base budget. The \$7.8 million is the top-up that brings the total budget scheme to \$11.9 million in 2014–15.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: For this year?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes. We negotiate an outcome each year for what the top-up needs to be. We have done it each year for the last I do not know how many years—since 2008. There has been a review undertaken in the last 12 months around how best to provide those services and make it possible for people to access services easily. Whether it continues to be done the way it is currently being done is something that is being considered at the moment

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: When will we have that decision?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Basically, we will be in a position to include the outcomes of that review into the next budget cycle; so it will be part and parcel of the review that is taken around our requirements for next year as well. The review is partly about how to better facilitate people’s access to the services. As you know, we have indicated that people can have direct access to that funding through the utilities themselves as a means of getting those services more easily accessible.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: So you may not continue to administer that; you may just allow the utilities to do that?

[8.10 pm]

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is already happening, to some degree.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: To some degree. Now I will ask one more question, as I know Hon Alanna Clohesy is really keen to ask some more questions.

The CHAIR: Just one moment. Before you go ahead, have you moved off the HUGS question?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Yes, I have asked about —

The CHAIR: I think I have a supplementary here from Hon Ken Travers. I will give him the opportunity, and then I will come back to you for this one, and then after you have finished that last question, I will then move on to the next question on the list.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: My apologies for having to leave the chamber for a brief second, as I may have missed the answer. I note that \$7.8 million has gone into HUGS for this year’s allocation, but under details of grants, it shows that you are expecting to spend \$9 million on HUGS this year. Where does the other money come from and why are you expecting HUGS to be slightly higher next year? So, there is \$7.659 million this year and \$9.488 million next year.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Peter Byrne can speak to that.

Mr Byrne: That portion of the \$11.9 million is for grants. The remainder is for financial counselling and also a small portion—about \$200 000—is for the administration of the scheme.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Why are you expecting the grant side of it to go from \$7.6 million up to \$9.4 million? It suggests that you are expecting to make more grants in 2014–15.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We expect to see more funding go out in grants as a proportion of the total than had previously been done, and less go out in financial counselling. We want people to be

able to access the grant funding more directly and financial counselling only if necessary. People do not actually need to go through a financial counsellor to get to the grant and to get those grants funded. They can go directly to the utilities to get those grants funded.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do you therefore expect the number of recipients to increase, though, or are you increasing the amount that each recipient will receive?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, it is both.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: What is the breakdown? How much is it about an increase in the number of recipients and how much is it about recipients getting an increased grant?

Hon HELEN MORTON: We made a decision that we wanted to see a higher percentage of funding available for grants out of the total. I am not sure whether we have got a percentage breakdown, but we made a decision that a higher percentage out of the total needed to be available in grants for people, and that is what has been reflected in the papers.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I understand that, but I would struggle to believe that the government is approving money without some sort of more detailed analysis of how you expect it to be spent, either in terms of your increasing the grant that is available or you have an expectation that the number of recipients will be —

Hon HELEN MORTON: As I indicated, it is both, and the overall outcome was that we wanted to see 80 per cent of the funding go to grants and 20 per cent of the funding go to financial counselling. That is the outcome that we struck on this budget; so it will be both.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How will the increase in the amount that people receive be calculated? How will that be determined?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will allow Phillipa to speak on that.

Mrs Beamish Burton: Usually, there is an annual review and they look at the price adjustment taking into account the electricity prices and then increase the grant amount accordingly.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So if the grant goes up by 4.5 per cent, would the rest have to be based on an increase in the number of recipients that you are expecting?

Mrs Beamish Burton: As well as taking into the account the 80 per cent rule.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If Treasury is allowing you just to have a grant without being able to justify it, well done! But I find it very hard to believe that you would not have had to provide figures about where you expect the average grant to be X and the number of recipients to be Y, and that is how it is arrived at. We want to increase the amount that goes out to people, but I cannot believe there is not an underlying business case about how that would be broken up into an increase in recipients and an increase in each recipient's grant. Would you have that information back at your office about the business case on which that figure of \$9.48 million was developed? I just find it extraordinary that you managed to convince Treasury to just let you have the same amount and changed it to 80/20 and not actually put together a business case about how you spent it. Did you do any modelling like that at all of the number of recipients that you expect next year?

Mrs Beamish Burton: We did do some modelling on how much we needed in our request, but then we were not involved in the decision about the 80 per cent going towards grants.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The total amount that is in the budget was the amount that was modelled as being required. The decision that was made at government level was the percentages that would go to grants versus the percentages that goes to financial counselling.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can I ask for whatever modelling was done to be provided as supplementary information, please?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No D6.*]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: If Hon Ken Travers has finished on that issue —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I have a HUGS question.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: On this particular area of HUGS?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will allow Hon Alanna Clohesy to ask a question on this specific issue.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: You are talking about that being undertaken with an annual review. Is it an annual review of the base provisions?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Sorry, is it an annual review that does what?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Of the base provisions of HUGS?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, so the annual review is how much is required over and above that base level of funding that is built into the budget.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How is that review undertaken?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Peter Byrne.

Mr Byrne: Effectively, there was a submission based on what we expected the tariff increases to be, and also on whether we are aware of any circumstances where there would be additional recipients that would be coming on board, and so what effect that tariff increase would have on the numbers we would be expecting.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is statewide? Is that across all of the different tariffs? Does it take into account all the different tariffs?

Mr Byrne: That will —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Maybe it is just easier if I ask for a copy of the review.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will just see.

Mr Byrne: Based on the tariffs, we will be assessing applicants living south of the twenty-sixth parallel and applicants living north of the twenty-sixth parallel, and so we will have different grant rates based on those. So that is the distinction we use, effectively, to determine the actual grant amounts.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is it possible to get a copy of the most recent review that was undertaken to determine that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No D7.*]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Just in terms of the HUGS's referral to financial counselling services, what data is maintained in relation to the number, the length of time and outcomes for those?

Mr Byrne: We certainly collect key performance indicators from our financial counsellors on a range of measures, and so we are collecting data from them—if that was the question.

[8.20 pm]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes, it is—not just the number of referrals, but also the outcomes. How long were people—how many visits did they make? How long was the service that they attended? What were the outcomes? How do you know that people benefited from the use of being referred to financial counselling?

Mr Byrne: We actually will survey applicants who use the service to see whether they feel they have benefited and they are able to manage their finances better as a result of the counselling. With

counselling there is often, you know, they may be presenting for a HUGS grant. However, there may be other issues that the counsellor is helping them with at that time, so there is that overall service that can be provided in instances where it is needed. There are also others that may just need at that point in time to be assisted through a tough time, but from then on they are able to manage their own finances.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is there any data on the number of the people who have to revisit to apply for more HUGS grants? They apply for a grant; they get referred to counselling—how many times? I suppose it has only been one year so you would not have that.

Mr Byrne: No, we do not particularly have that data that shows whether there is the repeat because it is sort of a one year —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is there the intention to collect that kind of data?

Mr Byrne: Currently the scheme is actually being reviewed, so that is one of the points that would be picked up in that. It was effectively saying, “Well, is the HUGS scheme working?” and whether it could be delivered in a better way. So, for example, you know, more use of utilities or other ways to deliver it. A part of that is also whether our information collection could be improved if the scheme is going to continue to be delivered by the Department for Child Protection or by other means.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can I just ask Emma White to make a few comments on this.

Ms White: Just to add to Peter’s answer, there are lots of data available, including representations, as you inquired specifically about. Largely some of that is collected through service agreements with financial counsellors through our usual contracting process. In terms of specific numbers here, we would need to seek that, but there is data available on all those functions that you have inquired on.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: In that time I thought of a different question. I have been trying to ascertain how many kids in care got there because they were evicted from Homeswest housing. Do you keep those figures?

Hon HELEN MORTON: We are obviously aware of how many families are evicted and, therefore, how many families have children who belong to families that have been evicted. But just because a family has been evicted, of course the children may not be at risk. They may have other options that they are pursuing. The number of children who are coming into care as a result of eviction—I think it is not necessarily the case that they come into care as a result of eviction. There has to be some safety risks—some concerns around safety for the children. So, I would ask Emma to expand on that.

Ms White: Up to December last year we had received 319 referrals from the Department of Housing as a result of the disruptive management process. We have got an MOU between ourselves and housing whereby we stipulate at every point in the implementation of that policy, the strike process, we receive referrals where there are children. In terms of direct result for bringing children into care, almost never is there one issue of homelessness or eviction, as the minister has outlined, that would be the direct cause. There is generally a range of other issues—maybe family domestic violence, drug and alcohol et cetera—that we assess in terms of the impact of the collection of those concerns on that individual child to make that determination whether or not bringing that child into care is actually required.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Yes, I am aware of that. I am also aware of the fears that people have about losing their kids because they have lost their house. So, that really is the nature of my question. So, in how many cases does that eventuate?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The answer is almost nil.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I will finish with a question about the National Affordable Housing Agreement. I notice in the “Spending Changes” and in answer to my question on notice the commonwealth contribution is increasing considerably up to the 2017–18 forward estimates. Is that still current? Is that money guaranteed?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will just make sure that I am talking about the right one here. It is on page 415.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: On page 415, the item “Homelessness Services—National Affordable Housing Agreement”.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We think we have got what you are asking here.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I also asked on notice—it was item (e) on my first question.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Did we give you a really good answer?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: You just said that the adjustments were because of an update to the commonwealth contribution following their 2013–14 midyear *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. So I think things might have changed recently and I was wondering if the amounts that the commonwealth was intending to contribute were still that high.

Mrs Beamish Burton: They are very similar to those figures. There are minor adjustments. There was an increase, I think, for this year, but slight adjustments in the out years for the reduction.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Can I ask that that be provided in supplementary information? You might not have it with you, but could you provide it with me supplementary information how much money you would need from the commonwealth?

[*Supplementary Information No D8.*]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, if I can just ask you to turn to page 416 of the budget papers. There I note that one of the desired outcomes of the department is that children and young people needing protection are safe from abuse and harm. Indeed it goes on to indicate that one of the services provided, where a great deal of money is spent, some \$140 million in the coming financial year, is protecting children and young people from abuse and harm. I have a number of questions that arise from that, minister, through the chair. Can you indicate if you are aware of a referral by the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People in late 2012 to the Commissioner for Children and Young People directing her to inquire into the issue of the sexualisation of young people in this state?

[8.30 pm]

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am not aware of that, is the first comment.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Are you in a position to indicate, if you are not aware of it, whether the department was ever consulted during the course of what one can only presume would have been an inquiry by the commissioner in, I would guess, late 2012, the beginning of 2013.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Apart from being concerned about the issue myself, in terms of the specific question you are asking, I am not aware but I will ask Emma White to speak to it.

Ms White: The department was not aware specifically of the joint standing committee as you have described. However, we were aware and have been provided with a copy—I know it is also on the children’s commissioner website—of the literature review it did as part of that process. The department was not part of a formal consultation as such, but certainly we have made use of and been in contact with the children’s commissioner around the information obtained in the literature review. Of course, we have made use and circulated the products that have come as a result of that particular review. The resources for parents is an example in terms of what is sexualised behaviour, how they might be concerned, how to make sense of the media and how to talk to your children about those particular issues.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So that we are talking about the same thing, prior to the referral in late 2012, the Commissioner for Children and Young People did a number of things, including the literature review to which you referred. Notwithstanding that, after that time, late 2012, the committee directed that the commissioner undertake an inquiry into this matter—something more substantial than a literature review. It seems interesting, at least, that the department obviously has not been contacted by the former Commissioner for Children and Young People about that, which probably makes my following question redundant in terms of whether you have received a copy of a report from the Commissioner for Children and Young People. If you were not aware of the inquiry and were not consulted, plainly you would not have received the report.

Maybe I can conclude the question then, minister, and ask: now that you are aware that such a thing exists and that such a thing did occur and given one of the desired outcomes is that children and young people needing protection are safe from abuse and harm, would it be of any benefit to your department if the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People tabled the report by the commissioner?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I agree that it would be important and helpful and beneficial, basically, in the overall context in which Emma talked about the role of the department, so I can only concur with what you are saying.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I appreciate, minister, that like me, you do not know what is in the report.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I have not seen it.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: None of us knows how beneficial it would be in terms of reading and implementing it. But at least I appreciate you are indicating that it would be of some assistance to be able to read it.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I come back to the asset investment program and works in progress on page 421. What is the “Accommodation—Service Delivery Accommodation” line item composed of?

Mr Byrne: The asset investment program outlines the department’s capital expenditure for 2014–15. The department has been allocated \$6.7 million in capital appropriation for 2014–15 and we have also received approval to carry over \$542 000 capital funding from 2012–13 to fund projects that were ongoing from 2013–14.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What are those projects?

Mr Byrne: In 2013–14, the ones that were completed in terms of office accommodation and expansion were Busselton office; Port Hedland sub-office; Kununurra office; Midland office; Roebourne office; Geraldton office; Karratha office; the McCall Centre, Cottesloe; Northam and the working with children office. In 2014–15 and 2015–16, which is the \$6.75 million plus the carryover from unspent this year, we expect Armadale office, Merredin office and South Hedland office to be completed and some new fit-out in head office and the Mirrabooka office, which was the new funding in 2015–16.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Of the completed works of hostels and group homes and expanding of residential care—you may have a list which you might find easier to table —

Hon HELEN MORTON: What is your question?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What are they?

Hon HELEN MORTON: What are the completed works?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Correct.

Mr Byrne: In 2013–14, the department completed the reform of the residential care services. The residential care facilities completed were the Kalgoorlie residential care facility, Newman family group home, Port Hedland residential care facility and the Wyndham family group home.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What are the works in progress in relation to hostels and group homes?

Mr Byrne: They were all completed in 2013–14.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Nothing will be completed this financial year—they are all done?

Mr Byrne: Or will be, yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What are the plans for future group home and residential care facilities? You said there is nothing there for 2014–15 other than those in progress. Is there anything in the forward estimates for new works?

Mr Byrne: We have a strategic asset plan that looks at out years. In terms of the residential home facilities run by the department, at this stage we believe we have enough in the coming number of years. In terms of family group homes—non-government group homes—whilst we are turning over older stock, we may replace them with new homes, using funding and possibly topping up funding. At this stage, there is no requirement in the out years for us to build new facilities.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Where in the budget is the new works for the Ellenbrook refuge we were talking about?

Mr Byrne: The \$2 million was allocated to us in the 2013–14 budget and the funding was transferred to Housing, which is building the facility on our behalf. We have maintained the recurrent funding, which is approximately \$1 million per year.

[8.40 pm]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So it was in your budget last year, and then presumably some time in this financial year it was transferred to Housing, so it would show up in their budget?

Mr Byrne: It would, yes. Via section 25 of the Financial Management Act, we transferred it over to them, so it will actually be within their allocation.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I do not think I got an answer last time: when was the decision made to develop the refuge in Ellenbrook?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I know we did not answer that, but I believe that we took that on notice because we said we did not actually know the precise date or when it was actually agreed that it would be at Ellenbrook. I think your question is: when was it decided it would be at Ellenbrook?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is right.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am fairly sure we took that on notice to provide to you.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can we just check whether that is on notice?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We are trying to check that at the moment. Why do we not allocate that as supplementary information D9, and then when the department or the agency is looking through it they will be able to determine whether they have answered the question in a previous supplementary information or not?

[*Supplementary Information No D9.*]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: When were the discussions with the housing authority, I guess it is now called, commenced in relation to the location of the refuge being in Ellenbrook?

Hon HELEN MORTON: That would be part of that answer.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Are you happy for that to go into that supplementary?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That will be incorporated in D9.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Just in terms of the operating costs of that one refuge, where are the operating costs of that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is actually in the base budget of the department. It was an allocation at the last election, so it is in the base budget now.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How much is allocated for that operation?

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is \$1 million.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That will do me for the time being, thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I would like to ask a couple of questions.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I have a question on the same issue.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: On the same issue?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes.

On the issue of refuges, minister, you will be aware that I have asked some questions over the past few months about the future of Roebourne, Wyndham, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing. I understand that some negotiations have been ongoing between the department and those services. Are you in a position now to advise what the ongoing level of funding will be for each of those four services, and whether that will mean that they will continue to operate as a 24-hour service, or if indeed some of them will now only operate —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will allow the minister to answer that question, but I will point out that that is stretching the boundaries of what is the same issue.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I thought we were on refuges.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We are on Child Protection, so any question can be supplementary.

Hon HELEN MORTON: They are women's refuges in those four communities that you have spoken about.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Absolutely, and I thought we were on the same point.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, we are.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thanks, minister.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The decision that has been made and relayed to the service providers is that no funding will be reduced from their current level of funding they have had this year, but we do have to make better use of that funding in those communities. Work has commenced on that process, both individually and as an action plan for the whole of the Kimberley.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you, minister. So that level funding that they anticipated getting, they will get for the next few years.

Hon HELEN MORTON: They will get the full level of funding that they were anticipating for this year, and it will continue.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: And the same level of funding for next year, or will the negotiations impact what the level is?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The negotiations will determine how best it can be spent in that community. Despite everything, there is no use us putting the funding into a women's refuge if it is not being made use of. That does not mean, however, that family and domestic violence is not still a major issue in that area, and so the funding needs to be better utilised to provide services for those women and children.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, is this an ongoing process or when will the final decision be made by the department in conjunction with the service provider?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will just ask Emma to talk about the task force and its work up in the Kimberley at the moment.

Ms White: The task force and action planning that has commenced is a 12-month process that is entirely in line with the family and domestic violence state plan, and we are undertaking a range of consultations in partnership with local refuge providers as key leads in the local consultations. We are meeting and getting information from people who use the service and the service providers themselves, and having quite deliberate discussions around the nature of violence in the Kimberley, around the incidences, where the critical points are, and what happens in terms of what is useful for the victim's safety and their children. As the minister has indicated, there is an underutilisation of the actual refuge in a traditional sense; however, there is clearly a great need to provide support for women and all community members affected by violence. Those consultations, that action planning and that task force that is underway will really help inform what the model is at the end of the 12 months, and of course how we might then seek to implement that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I have a couple of questions I would like to ask. One arises from page 417 of budget paper No 2, under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency". One of the dot points states that 50 per cent of children in care are Aboriginal, and points out that that is disproportionate to the percentage of Western Australian youth that identify as Aboriginal. That in itself is alarming, obviously, and we have discussed a fair bit about it today. I would be interested to know if you have any statistics around, firstly, what percentage of children in care come from what is now described as a culturally and linguistically diverse background that is not Aboriginal.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I understand that it is around about six per cent, but we might take that on notice to firm up that figure.

[*Supplementary Information No D10.*]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: My next question was going to be in relation to the families, or clients I think they are often referred to, who are provided with assistance from the department generally, and what percentage would identify as CALD?

Ms White: We can provide some information on notice; however, it is very difficult to actually have confidence in those figures because of course not every family that comes to the department identifies as being from a CALD background, or in fact the nature of our contact may be brief or targeted and they have not volunteered that information. As an overall percentage it is quite hard, I suppose, to provide quite an accurate answer to that question.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: So there is no requirement on staff to record whether people are from a CALD background; is that what you are saying to me?

Ms White: No; certainly there is a requirement, and we have built prompts into our client services system for people to make that record. Staff are encouraged—in fact trained—to explore how a person's cultural background impacts on their current circumstances, their identity and our whole intervention, but not in every instance do people identify as CALD.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Look, I understand that in normal interaction there might be a few that are missed out, or the interaction might have been so brief that you could not even get the opportunity to identify that. But in the normal course of events it is recorded, so perhaps we can incorporate that information into D10. D10 will include both children in care and more general services provided. I am not under any misapprehension that you would have 100 per cent accuracy, but I would appreciate it if you could provide the information you do have.

[8.50 pm]

Ms White: Certainly.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: What sort of training is provided to staff to enable them to deal with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

Ms White: All staff that commence with the department, district staff in particular, undergo quite a structured, mandated training program when they first arrive, not only to gain appreciation,

knowledge and skills of working with people with a CALD background, but also how that might actually interplay or not with child protection family support issues. We have senior CALD specialists within our agency whose purpose is to be available for consultation for them to seek and build relationships with the CALD community, so in fact, when specific information and specific understanding is required and that is not immediately at hand, we can certainly have access to that, so it is in our staff structure, in our formal training, and we also have a range of online modules and information available to staff to support them to work effectively.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Is there a requirement of staff, particularly front-line staff or case officers, to undertake ongoing training; and, if there is a requirement, is there some sort of magic figure or guideline as to how much training or the type of training they should undertake on an annual or any other basis? That is, training generally; not just specifically CALD training.

Ms White: As a result of the reforms of the previous Department for Community Development, the department sought to define and implement a range of learning development strategies; we in fact class ourselves as a learning organisation and we are registered to do so, so we have a 70/20/10 model whereby we recognise that 70 per cent of learning and development training happens on the ground, on the job; 20 per cent through formal training; and 10 per cent through specific supervision consultation et cetera. We consider that opportunities for learning and training happen at every level. There is certainly a requirement for ongoing training; we discuss that and tailor that with individual staff through supervision and they plan their learning plan for the year. We do not have a quantitative goal per staff; it really is about meeting their particular learning needs, as identified through the supervision process. In saying that, we have targeted training for specific groups of staff throughout the organisation. For example, field workers have very specific identifiable training packages that have been tailored and designed for caseworkers. We have training that is more targeted to our team leaders, as an example, who are not only delivering critical child protection services, but are leading the management of staff, so we have a tiered system as such where people can pick and choose; they can pick and plan a pathway. The expectation is, though, that staff are undertaking training and ongoing learning and development, and that is discussed through supervision and annual reviews, and that planning is recorded.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: On another matter—this is the last area that I have questions on—there was a report in the newspaper I think yesterday, 10 June, about a case on which Supreme Court Commissioner Kevin Sleight made some rather critical comments about the operation of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. I am not interested in the whys and wherefores of who did what and when, but has the department investigated that particular case; and, if so, has there been any identification of particular failures—whether it was just simply an oversight by an officer or a series of officers, or if there was anything more systemic?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: What page are we on?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: It is really following on from the training provided. We are still on significant issues impacting the agency. If we want to go to what page, I will ask every member to identify a particular page for every part of every question.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Just ask the question.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Oh, thank you for that, given that I have sat through lots of questions from other members. I appreciate being given the opportunity to ask a question. Has there been an investigation, firstly; and, secondly, what has been discovered? Was there some sort of systemic failure or just simply a series of mistakes in handling that particular case that led to the negative findings from the Supreme Court Commissioner?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Obviously when I read an article about a finding by a Supreme Court judge that refers to the department as having blatant disregard for the legislation and unilaterally making decisions despite the legislation, that is of great concern. In this particular case, obviously

there was a lot of investigation that took place, both from myself to the department, and the department in terms of looking at its processes and how that has come about in the time frame concerned. The issue is that when people are taken into provisional care they have two days in which to provide an application and an affidavit that actually sits with the application. Two days is actually quite a tight time frame, when cases involve someone who might have a particular health problem where you are seeking out health records to provide as part of that affidavit. In this particular case I do not think it is acceptable that it took 13 working days to get the information together. Sometimes it can involve tracing and making contact with other family members et cetera, so it is a concern. Equally, at the same time, the department does have to make sure that it is taking into provisional care those children who are at risk for whatever reason. I know that a lot of work has been done internally in the department and in conjunction with the Children's Court to streamline the process so that the legislative time frame can be met, but in this particular case, it was decided that we would not appeal the Supreme Court's ruling, and that is mostly because in the seven or eight months that the child was in care, although it had been difficult to have regular contact with the parent, there was substantial improvement in the circumstances surrounding the ability of the parent to undertake those roles and responsibilities. Whilst that is an outcome and it talks a little bit about what took place in this case and some of the changes that are taking place in the department as a result of that and in particular with the Children's Court, I will allow Emma to make some additional comments on that.

Ms White: In relation to some of the changes and improvements made as a result of this ruling, as the minister has indicated, the two-day time frame is a challenge; you have a lot of competing priorities to do with settling a very distressed child; meeting and explaining to the family the rationale for the child coming into care; sourcing placements; equipping carers with correct information so they can care for the child; and writing the affidavit. You might also be seeking additional information from health professionals et cetera to include in the affidavit with the application, and there is a quality assurance process and oversight process through legal services. What we have been working on for some time is a streamlined affidavit, and this has been supported through the Children's Court, where we provide more specific information to do with the initial application.

[9.00 pm]

With case workers, over time a practice has developed where they provide every bit of information and every bit of detail that we have. Some of the affidavits are up to 40 pages. That is not helpful for the court in the first instance and it really does compound these time frames. So we have agreed to a very abridged affidavit that will go with the application, that gives the court the required information and meets the rules of evidence, and that also provides information to the court and to the parents as to what the plan is for the child; and they have accepted that. That will reduce considerably the time required to produce that first affidavit, and of course subsequent affidavits are required by the court as that court process proceeds.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I did not mean to cut you off. Have you concluded?

Ms White: Yes, thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That really identifies something that would significantly impact on case workers on an almost daily basis if they are expected to produce 40-page affidavits in two working days, at the same time as do all those other things that you identified. Without taking up too much more time on this issue, could you let me know what the average length of time would be between the time that first affidavit is filed and the time that the matter is first heard in the Children's Court? It is the next day, is it 48 hours or is it a couple of weeks?

Ms White: In terms of the exact average, that is something that I would need to take on notice. It is at the first available listing, which the Children's Court coordinates generally within the first week after the application has been lodged.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: So it would be eminently sensible, in the process that you have just identified, that you would do a brief affidavit initially and allow the listing to happen, and then provide supplementary information either through further affidavits or whichever process is agreed to between the department and the court. So that indicates that from this case we have at least got a new process, or a newer process, that would alleviate some of the stress and the impact on case workers. Thank you. That is most helpful.

Before I go around to members who have already asked questions, I am going to seek, either from the members of the committee who have not asked questions if they have any questions, or from any of the other members—Hon Liz Behjat and Hon Paul Brown.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Could you give us a sense of where we are on the list?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: After that, it would be Hon Stephen Dawson and Hon Sally Talbot. But I have had an indication from Hon Alanna Clohesy as a member of the committee. You have asked some questions, but I will give you the opportunity to ask a few more, and then I will allow Hon Liz Behjat, who has waited patiently. So, Hon Alanna Clohesy.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: You can have mine if you like.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: You have both asked questions. So I am going to ask Hon Liz Behjat. I did call Hon Alanna Clohesy and I did not get any response, so Hon Liz Behjat.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: It is a very good question, I can assure you.

Minister, if I can take you to page 419, under “Services and Key Efficiency Indicators”, service 1, protecting children and young people from abuse and harm. Under “Efficiency Indicators”, the average cost per working with children check activity comes in at \$55 for the coming financial year, and it has been \$52 and \$51. Is that purely a cost recovery? My understanding is that these fees are subsidised by government. But I also understand that the actual cost is \$54 to apply for a check. “Heavily subsidised” is not \$2 per person, surely. So I do not know where that comes from. Can you give me some indication of what the actual costs are?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will ask Emma White to comment on that.

Ms White: Certainly. The cost includes the range of administrative processes that occur as a result of that working with children card application and subsequent screening. That will include accessing information through other sources, such as federal sources, Crimcheck et cetera. We have built in the increase of \$4 per working with children card, as you have indicated, primarily because of the additional administrative processes that are available to us to make those assessments and screenings through a range of sources—more and more have opened up over time.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: It says that these fees are heavily subsidised. The charge is \$52 as opposed to \$54. An amount of \$2 does not mean heavily subsidised. Where does the heavily subsidised come in?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We are only charging \$10 for the working with children check.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: We are charging \$54?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Perhaps the answer should come from the minister and the officers rather than speculation between the members.

Hon HELEN MORTON: You are asking about the \$4 increase, when in fact the cost of doing the working with children check is much higher than that.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The average cost per working with children check activity, according to the efficiency indicators, for 2013–14—the estimated actual—is \$51. You charge \$54 for those checks. You are saying the cost is heavily subsidised, but according to this it is costing you \$51 and you are charging \$54.

Hon HELEN MORTON: What you are mixing up, and what I started to mix up as well, is that it is not per application. It is per activity. There is more than one piece of activity associated with a single application around the working with children checks.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So what is the average cost per application, or can you not quantify that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The cost of processing one of these applications ranges in total from approximately \$97 to \$115. But, as I say, there are various activities associated with undertaking that application. It is important to recognise how many of these take place in a year, and the director general would have that information.

Ms White: To date, we have processed 101 087 applications for this financial year, and for subsequent years it has been quite similar. For 2012–13, it was 106 217 applications, and in 2011–12, it was 101 619 applications. To give you an indication of applications per activity, as an example, of the 101 087 applications that we have processed, that has actually included closer to 250 000 activities.

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is a huge amount of work that is undertaken by the department. There are over 300 000 working with children cards in play at any one time, and they have to be renewed every three years.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon Alanna Clohesy, do you have questions of your own?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I have always got my own questions.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I understand that, but rather than hand over your call to somebody else.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I will hand over my call to someone else.

[9.10 pm]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I refer members to pages 419 and 420. In particular I am looking at FTEs in a range of service areas. In a quick count of the FTE increases in 2014–15 budget target, I think there are 58 extra FTEs across the agency. Is the minister able to let me know what the net additional FTE allocation per district is for both metropolitan and regional?

Hon HELEN MORTON: We actually do not have it broken down in that way here but we do have it by country, metro and residential areas.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can I have it on notice?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Precisely you want it by district, the FTE increase. The reason I know that is not available is that I was asked that question myself.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will take what you have.

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is not available yet because they are still working through that by district.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will take what you have, but can I have it on notice?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Do you want it now? Why do you not want it now? Why do you want to leave it?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Because I do not want you to spend 15 minutes reading the list when I have a few other questions that I want to get in.

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is why you ask questions here so that you can get information and answers.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: If you want to put it on notice, you do not have to ask the question at all. You can put it on notice after the hearing.

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is two sentences.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, if you think it is appropriate to read it now, I would love to hear it now.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Go for it. Emma White.

Ms White: Thank you. We have 21 FTE allocated to districts in the metropolitan area; we have 17 FTE allocated to districts in the country area; and we have 20 FTE allocated to residential facilities across the metro and country areas directly caring for kids in the residential facilities.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Does the minister have a further breakdown as to where they are going in the region?

Hon HELEN MORTON: No.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: When do you anticipate that information being available?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Probably in a month. I was going to say in time for your last question in June.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The new financial year is about to start.

Hon HELEN MORTON: But that is not a month away, so it will have to be in the first lot of questions on notice when we come back after the break.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I did touch on vacancies earlier on but I did not ask about existing vacancies across the agency at the moment, so if the minister can provide them now or indeed later.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, we have got it now.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It is the number of vacancies around the state, the positions and where the positions are located, please.

Hon HELEN MORTON: As I said, we can sit here and give you figure after figure after figure, but you actually want it on notice.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I would like it in a document, yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: It really kind of surprises me why you wait for this sort of a session to ask for things on notice when you could have had it before.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Because if you ask for it on notice, you might come back and say that information is not available.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, I am asking for it now because we are dealing with the new budget papers. I asked for the new positions based on that but I also want to get a sense of what is actually currently vacant, because I have some fear that the department is managing its budget by actually not filling positions. That might be conspiracy theories in my head—whatever—but I would just like to see in black and white where the new positions are going, what they are and also what is vacant currently and where they are.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Just because of the comment that you made, I have to tell you that the first thing I did when the so-called freeze came on board was get approval to fill a whole lot of vacancies in the Department for Child Protection and Family Support on the basis of them being absolutely necessary and that we would never not fill a position, a front-line position, on the basis of anything other than it not being needed.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, I would not expect anything less of you given the role you have, and this is a front-line agency, so I congratulate you for that. The conspiracy theory, as I said, might just be floating around in my head, but I just would like to get those figures when they are available, so if you can provide those, that would be great.

[Hon Ken Travers took the chair.]

The CHAIR: Will I make that D11 then? Are we clear about what it is?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can I just get clarity about the date of the vacancies?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: If it is easier to say 1 June.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes. We will find a convenient date. When I say “convenient date” I mean the date the information is actually collected by.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am sure the end of May or 1 June.

The CHAIR: A date that is a normal reporting date for the agency.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Exactly.

The CHAIR: Rather than a date that makes the figures look good!

[Supplementary Information No D11.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, am I right in saying that this year was the first year the department commenced delegating the case management of children in the CEO’s care who were on permanent protection orders, and who were in stable and long-term placements? So this is the first year that they have been delegated to the non-government sector, non-profit sector; am I right?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes. We actually started last year as a pilot.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It was last year, so it was not this year?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can I get a sense, minister, about how many children are currently case-managed by the not-for-profit sector?

Hon HELEN MORTON: There are 19 children in care who are placed in four community sector organisations at the moment, and the pilot commenced on 1 July 2013.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am sorry, I meant this calendar year, yes; okay, thank you. Do we know what the cost of this initiative has been?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I do not have a specific cost but I am being told it would be less than \$100 000. And when you say “cost” do you mean what we are actually paying because it is cost-neutral?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: What we are actually paying to the not-for-profit.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Because if these children were not in that care, they would be in our care, so it is cost-neutral. But I think you are asking me how much we are paying those agencies for that work.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is exactly it, and you think it is about \$100 000 in total for the 19 children.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes. Excuse me, but Emma would like to say something about this.

Ms White: In addition, as part of that delegation of that case management, the agencies receive the total case support costs for that child on top of the \$100 000, so it evens up. The money comes from a couple of different places, so the total unit, the whole thing, goes over to the agency. So, the case support costs plus extra support plus the training that we provide and support we provide to the agencies to be able to actually deliver on the statutory requirements.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So, minister, through you Ms White, I guess what I am asking is: what are we handing over to those not-for-profit organisations for those 19 kids? If you are able to provide that total just to give me a sense of everything that is included in the pie; so can I take that as supplementary?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Sure.

[*Supplementary Information No D12.*]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am sorry to get into the negative so late in the evening, but have we had any reports of abuse or victimisation in relation to those 19 children who are in the care of those organisations?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The answer is no.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Great, thank you. That is the end of that question. I refer to care planning under “Outcomes and Key Efficiency Indicators” on page 418. The minister can answer this now if she wants but I think she will probably have to take some of this on notice. How many children aged between two and five are placed on the monitored list in each of 2012–13 and 2013–14 so far? How many children over the age of six were also placed on that list in the same years? Of those children on the monitored list, how many had a care plan prepared within 20 days? Have all those children had a health and education plan? Finally, can the minister confirm that individual children are consulted on the content of their care plan and is there an age limit on that? So, is it only children over six who are consulted, or is it everybody?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Emma White.

Ms White: In relation to the question to do with care planning and child participation in that care plan, we do not work on an age basis as such; we work on the child’s ability to participate. We have a range of tools in which they may do that from, you know, directly around the table making those plans with caseworkers, or in fact having a more one-on-one conversation with that person; or through Viewpoint, which is another really important forum in which young people can make comment on a range of factors to do with their experience and plan for being in care. We have children as young as four participating in their care planning, and then we have children who are as old as 10 that in fact do not yet.

[9.20 pm]

Hon HELEN MORTON: What were the dates that you wanted the monitored list for?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: For 2011–12, 2012–13 and 2013–14 so far, whether that is to the end of May or 1 June.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I have got the total numbers, but you wanted it broken down by age group.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: If I can have that, yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will just say that it is an ever-decreasing number of people.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is good to hear, minister—good to hear. The other part was if you could also take on notice, in relation to those children on the monitored list, how many of those children had their care plan prepared within 20 days.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Within 20 days, yes. Can I just clarify: when you said 20 days, the actual requirement is for it to be done within 30 days. Are you just —

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No, I did mean within the required time, I am sorry; I did mean 30 days.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Within the required time, so it is 30 days, yes.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: And, actually, I have got 30 on the piece of paper in front of me, I’m sorry, and read 20. Chair, are you aware of what —

The CHAIR: I was just going to make the point that we are finishing at 9.30 pm. The only people who have indicated that they still have questions are you and Hon Sally Talbot, so I am going to leave it between the two of you to sort out when you stop and you allow Hon Sally Talbot to ask some questions. I am sure you two can work that out between you.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am just going to ask a couple, and then I —

The CHAIR: Sorry; I am just unclear about what is happening about that last question.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Sorry, Chair. The minister had committed to providing supplementary information, and it related to children on the monitored list, so ages two to five and six —

The CHAIR: Within 30 days.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes. So, you are taking that as supplementary information.

Hon HELEN MORTON: No. You have got the 30 days mixed up with something else. This is about the numbers of children on the monitored list by age breakdown, and the age breakdown that was requested was —

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Two to five, and then six and above.

[*Supplementary Information No D13.*]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: And then the other part of it was, as the minister said, how many of those children had a care plan prepared within 30 days.

The CHAIR: So that is all part of D13.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Page 417, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”: the final dot point is about homelessness, so I have a couple of questions here about the national partnership. If I could ask you whether any of those programs have been cut because of federal funding shortfalls.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Just so that you are clear, the only shortfall from the federal government in regards to this program in WA was around capital. The other funding was negotiated at that level, so there have been no other service program areas that have been cut.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So, capital funding cuts by the federal government.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, that is right. The reason that we are umming and ahing about that is because it would not come to us; it would go to Housing, anyway. So capital funding around that goes to Housing.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Okay. Can you tell us, minister, how many programs—it is not clear from the budget papers—will be delivered under the national partnership in 2014–15?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Eighty-one.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: In WA?

Hon HELEN MORTON: In WA.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: You probably do not want to read out the whole list of the 81. Can we —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Are you sure you would not like me to do that?

The CHAIR: Well, I would not, because it would probably take us past 9.30.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can you give us the list of programs that are delivered under the national partnership for 2014–15 and 2015–16?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, that is fine.

[*Supplementary Information No D14.*]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Has there been an independent evaluation of the national partnership agreement?

Hon HELEN MORTON: You are asking had there been an evaluation?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, absolutely. It was exceptional in terms of its findings in terms of WA, and it was the basis on which we were able to very strongly lobby the federal government for a continuation of the program even prior to the budget being handed down. It was the Auditor General who did that review, and it was incredibly positive.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you, minister. Given that we are not quite at the end of the financial year, do you have data about how many people were assisted in WA under the national partnership programs in 2013–14?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Just give us five seconds; I am sure we can find out.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: May I just give you a couple of parameters that might be included in a supplementary question or —

Hon HELEN MORTON: We have got various bits and pieces of information, which are probably not what you are looking for, so we will take that on notice.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Okay. What I am actually looking for is: how many Western Australians were assisted in 2013–14; how many of those were identified as Aboriginal; how many were children; and how many are expected to receive assistance in 2014–15? Can you take that as one —

Hon HELEN MORTON: I do not know whether we can do the last one about how many of them, or how many are expected —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Sorry; how many Western Australians—how many people?

Hon HELEN MORTON: We will do what we can for you in that respect.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Okay. Mr Chair, that is it.

The CHAIR: Okay.

[Supplementary Information No D15.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, my next question relates to page 419, “Protecting Children and Young People from Abuse and Harm” and working with children checks. Minister, what was the staffing allocation of the working with children unit on the following dates: if I can have it for 30 June 2012, 30 June 2013, and 1 June this year? Can the minister also let me know how many persons held a negative working with children notice on the same dates? Can a person with a negative notice access the parent volunteer exemption? The first two I presume you will have to take on notice.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The third was: can a person with a negative notice access the parent volunteer exemption?

Ms White: No, they cannot. If I could just explain, the recommendation through the review of the working with children legislation has recommended, and we have accepted that recommendation, that we would seek to make amendment to the act to strengthen it so that they cannot seek exemption. At this current time, yes, they can.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So they can at the moment, but that is one of the changes.

Ms White: Correct.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Minister, where are we in relation to the review of the act and something coming forward to Parliament?

[9.30 pm]

Hon HELEN MORTON: As you know, when a piece of legislation is developed it goes through a few different stages and we are midway through those stages.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So we are a while away still. In relation to the parent volunteer exemption, has anybody been charged with an offence? I guess I have just answered my own question, so I will leave that one for now. I asked questions about the monitored list. Does the department or do individual officers have such a thing as an unallocated list and, if so, what types of cases are on that list and who in the district office might look after that list?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The answer is no, but I want to give a more fulsome answer as to why I think what you are asking is not even possible.

Ms White: The monitored list captures all unallocated cases. There is not a second process by which we capture all list cases that need allocation for work. The capture is automated through our assist class services system. In fact, all unallocated cases are represented by that monitored list. If I understood the member's question, there is no such list as the member indicated. From time to time, when staff are on leave or have unplanned sick leave, we have a process within each team to determine how we might meet the needs of that particular case on that day or week when someone is away. We have duty officers in every district, some of whom sit at the cold call end of our work, but also duty officers who are allocated to children in care teams, as an example, to meet needs or do tasks when people are away. A caseworker might be doing one particular task with a family when one of their other cases has an emergency, so we need a way to meet that need, which would be through our duty system. There is no unallocated second list of the monitored list.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: If somebody is on extended leave—long service leave or extended sick leave—and they are not replaced for whatever reason, what happens to their caseload? Would those cases necessarily go onto the monitored list or would they be shared amongst other child protection workers in that district?

Ms White: We seek to replace staff who go on extended leave, particularly with long service leave as the example that you used. In circumstances where workers take general annual leave, we might do a combination of things. Critically active cases must be allocated; they are not cases that can have someone to back them up and do tasks et cetera. When a person vacates their caseload and goes on extended leave, we seek to allocate that caseload to other caseworkers or that person's replacement. We look at the experience of the replacement person, who may be better off working on different cases. Some cases may be on the monitored list but it would be as a result of how we assess and work to the criteria about what is suitable for monitored lists, which are less active and more stable cases and those sorts of things. We use a range of mechanisms but long-term leave people are replaced and their cases are reallocated.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Sure, but I guess in some regional areas or offices it is not always possible to get someone to fill in for three months when someone has gone on long service leave. I imagine in some cases it is simply not possible for the department to replace a person, and in those situations or circumstances the cases would be reallocated to other staff in that office.

Ms White: We carry a very small monitored list in regional WA. Certainly, the member is connecting to some of the recruitment issues and replacement processes that can take some time in regional WA. We have implemented a country relieving team that is based in the metropolitan area, so when an office is short staffed or cannot replace a caseworker in a timely manner and cases need to be allocated and are not, then those staff are deployed and based in that particular area until such time as those allocations can be made in the usual manner. The monitored list in the country is very small and we have had quite unprecedented recruitment and retention of staff in country WA for the past two years that has mitigated the example that the member described.

The CHAIR: Noting the time, I have tried to let that line of questioning finish but I cannot let it go on any further otherwise Hansard will get upset. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you via the minister in writing in the next couple of days together with the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. 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. If member have any unasked questions I ask them to submit these to the committee clerk at the close of the hearing. Noting the number of people in the chamber losing their voices, I thank everyone again for their attendance today and we will see you tomorrow.

Hearing concluded at 9.36 pm
