

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt MLC asked:

7) I refer to page 527, Budget Paper No. 2 Vol. 2, Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators, and answers provided as part of the 'questions prior' process - specifically, the statement:

"A range of accommodation services funded by the Department of Communities are available for people experiencing homelessness, including crisis, transitional and long term accommodation with varied levels of support. People who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness are also encouraged to contact Entrypoint Perth which provides information and referrals to available crisis and transitional accommodation in the area."

I ask:

- (a) Does the Department keep track of availability of crisis and transitional accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, and if not, why not;
- (b) If yes to (a):
 - (i) How many beds and/or houses in each of those categories – crisis, transitional and long-term accommodation – are currently available; and
 - (ii) What is currently available specifically for families experiencing homelessness;
- (c) How many people have contacted EntryPoint this financial year;
- (d) Of the people who have contacted Entrypoint this financial year, how many people were given a crisis bed or accommodation on the same day;
- (e) If (d) is not tracked, why not;
- (f) What is the average wait time to speak to an operator on Entrypoint;
- (g) Of the incoming calls received by Entrypoint:
 - (i) what percentage of calls are answered and successfully put through to an operator;
 - (ii) if (i) is not tracked, why not
 - (iii) what percentage of calls are not put through to an operator due to capacity constraints such as busy lines or demand exceeding the number of available operators; and
 - (iv) if (iii) is not tracked, why not;
- (h) What, if any, other kinds of data are collected on Entrypoint; and
- (i) When is the Online Homelessness Services Portal due to be launched and how will it interact with Entry Point, or will it portal replace Entrypoint?

Answer

- a-b) Contracted service provider's regularly report the availability of crisis accommodation to the Department of Communities. Contracted service providers deliver a range of crisis accommodation options to a variety of different cohorts suitable to the specific needs of the individual.

Vacancies in crisis accommodation change on a daily basis and/or as soon as a change in their vacancy occurs.

Additionally, Communities provides brokerage funding to a number of services, for the purchase of goods and services for vulnerable people. This may be utilised in urgent situations for the provision of immediate short term accommodation options including caravan parks, hotels and short stay accommodation, where appropriate.

- c) Centrecare advise that for the 2021/22 financial year, according to their Unpublished Summary Data, 8,759 individual clients contacted Entrypoint.
- d) Entrypoint is an assessment and referral service that links clients to appropriate services available within the community. If a referral to accommodation is made then each individual accommodation provider will assess eligibility and suitability of the client for the accommodation setting.
- e) Not applicable
- f) For the 2021/22 financial year, Centrecare advise that the average waiting time before a Referral and Assessment Worker answered a call was 4.5 minutes. Entrypoint provides both call-back and online services to individuals who do not wish to wait on the phone.
- g) (i)-(ii) Centrecare's phone system shows that in the 2021/22 financial year almost a third of total calls were answered by an Assessment and Referral Officer and almost 30 per cent of calls left a voicemail and an officer called them back.

(iii)-(iv) This data is not collected

The remaining number of calls did not connect with an operator does not necessarily indicate that demand exceeded the number of available operators as there are other contributing factors such as hang-ups and the option for callers to receive a call back.

Centrecare advises the automated message that plays prior to connecting callers provides the option to leave a voice message and receive a call back.

- h) Communities received unpublished data from Centrecare, which includes information based on questions asked by operators, such as:
 - Initial contact numbers
 - Assessment status
 - Who is contacting the service
 - Reason for presenting
 - Referral outcomes – count of persons
 - Districts

Entrypoint also enters data into the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection via the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform, which goes to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

- i) As noted in the previous answer, some of these initiatives are under development. The Online Homelessness Service Portal is currently being developed in consultation with service providers and service users. The Portal is currently being designed and will be developed as an additional tool to improve visibility of, and access to, homelessness services. It is not intended to replace existing services such as Entrypoint. The Portal is intended to complement and support the Entrypoint service, increasing the efficiency of achieving positive outcomes for clients.

