

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2017–18 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2017**

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

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 9.01 am

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON

Minister Representing the Minister for Child Protection, examined:

Mr PAUL WHYTE

Acting Director General, examined:

Ms JACKIE TANG

Assistant Director General, examined:

Mr PAUL ISAACHSEN

Executive Director, Reform and Transformation, examined:

Mr BRAD JOLLY

Executive Director, Regulation and Concessions, examined:

Mr ANDREW GEDDES

Executive Director, Country Services, examined:

Mr LIAM CARRON

Chief Finance Officer, examined:

Ms PHILIPPA BEAMISH BURTON

Director, Financial and Business Services, examined:

Ms VANESSA HARVEY

Director, Strategy, Research and Initiatives, examined:

Mr DAVID SETTELMAIER

Senior Policy Adviser, Minister for Child Protection, examined:

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Just by way of a preamble, I refer all people present to the agenda for this morning and make a brief explanation as to the order of proceedings. There was a change a couple of weeks ago to specify an allocation of time for certain components of the Department of Communities. The period of 9.00 to 10.00 am is dedicated solely to child protection matters; 10.00 to 11.00 am is purely Housing Authority; 11.15 am to 12.15 pm refers to disabilities services functions only; and between 12.15 and 1.15 pm are the remaining functions of the Department of Communities. By way of guidance to members, due to the truncated time, can you please keep your questions purposeful, and to the minister and witnesses, your answers to the point if possible.

On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Can the witnesses confirm that they have each read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That is taken as all done.

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. It is also being broadcast live on Parliament's website. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private. If, for some reason, you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting the committee to scrutinise the budget papers, and the committee values your assistance with this.

Would the minister like to make a brief opening statement?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Members, can I get an indication of members who would like to ask questions today? Brilliant. Hon Colin Tincknell.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I have only one question at the start and then I may have some follow-up later. This is concerning page 237, "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" and is regarding demand for child protection services. It is a fairly long question. Family resource employees and residential care employees employed by the department play a significant role in the provision of care to vulnerable children in this state. Can the minister please list how much funding has been budgeted for employment of these workers, how many FTEs have been budgeted for and how does this figure compare with staffing in the last five years?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I might begin by saying that projected demand for child protection services is growing between four and five per cent annually. The Department of Communities will receive \$1.5 million in 2017–18 to meet the projected growth in cost and demand for child protection services for that year. I will ask the assistant director general, Ms Jackie Tang, if she can elaborate further and answer the remaining specifics of your question.

Ms TANG: In relation to the specific nature of the question, I cannot give that answer to you in detail. Minister, I do not know whether you wish to take that on notice to provide that detail because it is so specific.

[Supplementary Information No A1.]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Member, can you specify the nature of the request briefly again?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Can the minister please list how much funding has been budgeted for these workers, how many FTEs have been budgeted for and how does this figure compare with staffing in the last five years?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: For the record, I am happy to provide that information by way of supplementary information.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Wonderful. Thank you, minister.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, I ask you to turn page 241 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, which lists the "Service Summary" and in particular item 4, "Working with Children Checks". Can you explain to the committee the reasons for the budget cuts?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Mr Deputy Chair, that was page 241, the fourth item in the "Service Summary" in relation to working with children checks and the differential between the figure over the years. I will ask Ms Jackie Tang if she might be able to respond and perhaps Mr Brad Jolly might also like to respond.

Ms TANG: Minister, may I suggest that Mr Jolly may be in a better position to answer that detail.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Great; Mr Jolly.

Mr JOLLY: Thanks, minister, and thanks to the member for the question. The change in expenditure in working with children is largely as a result of the introduction of an online renewal process. About 70 per cent of renewals for working with children are now being processed online. It has improved both the timeliness of response and also the cost associated with the response.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The explanation is that the online renewal system has made things more efficient so there are some cost savings; hence, the lower figure in the budget. Is the online renewal system working well?

[9.10 am]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Again, I ask Mr Jolly to respond to that question.

Mr JOLLY: Yes. As I mentioned just now, about 70 per cent of applications during the 2016–17 financial year were processed online. That has enabled those renewal applications to be processed within a much shorter time frame than they have done previously. So, yes, we believe it is working well.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It was revealed in answers to questions in the Legislative Council this past month that an employee of the department for child protection was working for 12 working days without a valid working with children check or an application in process. It just seems like it might be the wrong time for there to be a cut in the budget for working with children checks when the department has one of its own employees working for 12 days without a card.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am not necessarily sure that the two things are related, but is there is somebody who can reply to that question? Perhaps Mr Jolly will be able to tell us about the process that department staff need to go through in relation to working with children checks.

Mr JOLLY: I am not able to speak specifically to the process for departmental staff. I can say that all people who are required under the working with children act to hold a working with children card are required to renew their applications within a prescribed time frame. From time to time, for a variety of reasons, those people experience delays. I could not speak to the specifics of this particular instance. It may well have been, again, for a variety of different reasons. Sometimes people are away on leave and sometimes they are infirmed. I just could not speak to the specifics.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I think the assistant DG, Ms Tang, might be able to provide some further information.

Ms TANG: I am not familiar with the actual case, but some brief advice that I have just received now is that it may be a matter that that particular person was not actually at the workplace. They may have been on maternity leave. Again, I cannot say that with absolute certainty. The comment made by Mr Jolly is that whilst it might not be current whether they were actually working directly with children during that period, at all times we should have up-to-date cards, but in this situation I think it was a case where the person was possibly not at the workplace.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Working for 12 working days without a card?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Is that a question, member?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is what the answer was in the Parliament, was it not—"I am on leave for 12 days"? I asked how many working days was this person working without a card or an application in process, and the response was 12 working days.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Member, do you wish to rephrase that as a question?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am hearing that there is not a witness present today who can help us with that particular case, so I will move on. Minister, it was also revealed in questions in Parliament this last month that 31 staff of the department of education and training did not hold a valid working with children check card or have an application in process. Again, I ask: is it really appropriate that there be cuts in this area of the budget when the department has got a person working for 12 working days without a check and the department of education and training has 31 staff who are not abiding by the process?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, the questions in relation to the department of education and training need to be discussed with the Minister for Education and Training. That does not fall within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Child Protection. If it is about them not having checks, it is about them not having checks. We would not have the specifics of those cases. In relation to the earlier case, if you would like information provided by way of supplementary in relation to that individual, by all means ask for it, but the answer remains. Mr Jolly explained to you in the answer to your initial question about the changes and the fact that the system, as Mr Jolly said, is more efficient now thanks to online applications.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, does your department conduct screenings for people engaged in certain paid or unpaid work with children?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can you be more specific, member?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Does your department conduct screenings for people who engage in certain paid or unpaid work with children?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The answer would be yes. People have to apply to the department; it is not a “we know somebody is going to do something”. Things happen on a daily basis, but somebody has to apply, under law, for a working with children check before we would know that they need a check.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is right, including people from the department of education and training; right?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: For people in all walks of life, provided they work with children, there is a requirement under law that they apply for working with children checks. I cannot comment on individuals, as I said, from the department of education and training. You would have to ask that minister. I can give you specifics about the working with children screening process and about the law, so I might ask Mr Jolly to make some comments in relation to the process. In relation to individuals from the department of education and training, I cannot answer questions about them and their specifics.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The committee does not need details about the process. We are familiar with the process. The point, minister, is that your department does conduct screenings for these people. There were 13 in the department of education and training who did not have a card. I could go on with respect to health, but I know you are going to tell me the same thing—that your people here are unable to answer questions with regard to why there were people in the Department of Health working without a valid card or application in process. We might leave it at that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: You do not have any further questions, member?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I think I am going to be putting them on notice. It is unfortunate that there is no witness here today who can assist us with those matters.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: My advice to you, member, is that you submit those questions via the electronic lodgement scheme rather than taking a supplementary here.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 236 under the spending changes and the third dot point under “Stopping Family and Domestic Violence” about male perpetrators of family and domestic violence service. I want to ask: where is the service operating and who is running this service?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I think Ms Harvey might be the correct person to answer that question.

Ms HARVEY: Is this in relation to the new perpetrator support service?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes.

Ms HARVEY: There is an existing service in operation, Breathing Space, that is run by Communicare. It is in Kwinana. It has been running for a number of years since 2003 and has an excellent reputation. One of the initiatives that has been put in place by the new government is the decision to establish another service along those lines. We are starting negotiations with Communicare as a first step to look at the establishment of a similar service in another area, preferably in a regional area so that we have another residential therapeutic service for perpetrators in the state.

[9.20 am]

Hon ALISON XAMON: Why is there no money allocated in the forward estimates for that? Is it because it is considered to be a one-off establishment?

Ms HARVEY: We have some money allocated for that; I think around \$200 000. That is to help with the early planning and scoping for that project. We then have to develop a detailed business case and take that to the ERC and cabinet.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I just want to clarify then that at the moment there is no money allocated in the budget or forward estimates for that service?

Ms HARVEY: No.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: If I can respond to that, member. Ms Harvey is correct: \$200 000 was approved in this budget for that planning process. That is to undertake the appropriate planning and development of the new perpetrator service that is similar to Breathing Space. There is a requirement on the department then to go through the 2018–19 budget process for the ongoing funding. The planning will be done out of this money and then in the 2018–19 budget we will go through a process to get more money to run the service.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is there a waiting list for the existing service? Is there any compulsory element for referral to that service?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I might ask Ms Harvey if she is the right person to answer this.

Ms HARVEY: I would have to take that on notice, minister. I am not sure whether there is a waiting list and, again, I am not sure about compulsion.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I please put that on notice?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Given that the service is run by a third party—it is not run by the agency itself—I will definitely take that question on notice and provide that by way of supplementary information. That is in relation to whether there is a waiting list. Do you want the figures of usage for the centre?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, please; and if there is a waiting list.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So we will provide figures for usage, if there is a waiting list and if there is any compulsion to attend by any body or court.

[*Supplementary Information No A2.*]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I draw members' attention to standing order 182(b): members can ask witnesses/public servants direct questions, but they have an entitlement to refer to a senior officer or the minister. They are just the ground rules.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I want to move on to election commitments. I refer again to page 236 under spending changes and specifically the Target 120 program development. Why is there no ongoing funding? Can the minister provide information about when it is anticipated it will commence?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The Target 120 program was an election commitment. That aims to work with high risk and recidivist juvenile offenders and the families to divert them from the juvenile justice system. The program will be aligned to the earlier intervention and family support strategy which focuses on reducing the number of families entering the child protection system through the provision of earlier intervention services. Initial funding allocation of \$600 000 has been provided to the department in 2017–18, again to assist with the planning and design of the program. The includes \$200 000 for the development of a business case and \$400 000 to support the application of a social investment approach to the program, which will assist with better targeting of at-risk juveniles and evaluating outcomes over time. It is a collaborative approach across government. A number of agencies are involved: the Department of Communities, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, what was Justice, the Department of Education and Treasury, together with Western Australia Police and the Mental Health Commission. All of those agencies are working together to oversee and progress the work. A business case will be developed for the 2018–19 budget process and key stakeholders will be consulted outside that process.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Where is it anticipated that it will be located or who will deliver it, or is that yet to be determined within the business case?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will ask the assistant director general, Ms Jackie Tang.

Ms TANG: My understanding is that Target 120 is very much in its early stages. The initial funding was to get information on the data around young people, so the top 120 families who are involved. There have been various attempts at this. My background is in corrective services so I am very familiar with this world. In time gone by there has been a very reactive response to juvenile offending and a great community outcry about it. This process is about understanding within the system where best to target those services: who are the children; what are the behaviours they are representing; and what are the best interventions? And then to go about that in a very methodical way rather than in a reactive manner. The early stages of the working group, which is across communities and across Treasury, is to really understand what data we would collect. We do not necessarily collect all data that would be relevant. It is really saying what do we collect and what do we need to collect, and then on the basis of that, decisions around which children, what locations and at what pace and the nature of those interventions that would be developed. That is the forming of the submission that I understand will go up preparing for a midyear review, but basically for the next budget to really get an understanding, because you cannot get those stats quickly. That partnership is really occurring. I must say that coming back into government I see the extent to which the Treasury is working with the departments about understanding this issue, because unless you fully understand that, the interventions will not be brought about. Part of the research is also looking across nationally and internationally. For Western Australia particularly, the issues are around Aboriginal children and offending rates and really understanding that perspective to be able to respond and to have an impact on these children, to reduce the number of children in Banksia and to basically give them a better outcome for the interventions that are provided

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Some of the work that is happening now, there are some issues with privacy between agencies. Some of the issues in terms of data sharing are being worked through.

I think the member was asking who was going to take the lead. Ms Tang, are we as Communities taking the lead? Is Treasury taking the lead at the moment but it will come back to us? Can you elaborate on that?

Ms TANG: Currently the lead, particularly for the chairing of the meeting, is in relation to—we, the Department of Communities will take the lead. Juvenile justice obviously has a key role, and it is across the services. My understanding is that Communities will take the lead, with a view that at the moment there are discussions around juvenile justice moving across to Communities, which would make sense, but I suppose for someone who has been involved heavily in the corrective services world, Communities takes the lead, but we need a cross-government responsibility. It is not a juvenile justice responsibility solely; nor is it just child protection or the tertiary end. It is really about how we engage education and health right at the beginning as a preventative stage. Although we need to manage and intervene for those children who are at the tertiary end at the moment, the more we can involve in the preventative stage an understanding of what engages young people into the criminal system and why is it that Aboriginal kids come in much earlier and stay much longer. To do that, it must be across community. At the moment, Communities is leading with a very strong engagement with those key agencies such as corrective services through juvenile justice, and obviously Treasury has not so much a service delivery but needs to get across and understand the issues that are behind it.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Ms Tang, that was a rather comprehensive reply. Member, I will offer you one more follow-up before I call another member.

Hon ALISON XAMON: To be clear, I was actually more after the how rather than the why. However, I will go on to my next question. It is again under spending changes. On the ninth point under “Other” is reference to the memorandum of understanding with CAHS. Why is there no allocation for that line item in the 2020–21 forward estimates?

[9.30 am]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Member, would you mind just giving a little time for us to find the line item to which you refer?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Of course.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: It is the memorandum of understanding with the child and adolescent health service?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am happy to respond in the first instance and then see if somebody else needs to elaborate. In January 2017, the Department of Local Government and Communities and the child and adolescent health service entered into an MOU whereby they both made contributions to establish a single contractual arrangement with Ngala family services to deliver a parenting helpline. The MOU expires in 2019–20, with the possibility of a two-year extension. The adjustment recognises the yearly contribution made by the child and adolescent health service through to 2019–20, so there is money there until 2019–20 because that is what the MOU says. The government will make a further decision later on about whether that is extended. Obviously, the program will be reviewed and then a decision will be made about the extension of the program in the out years.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So there is a suggestion that it might not continue?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No, that is not the suggestion. Essentially, the agreement was a limited one. It was a two-year agreement. That was what was funded, because it is a two-year agreement,

but it will be reviewed. If it is reviewed positively, obviously the government will make a decision then about the extension.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I refer to page 237 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the third paragraph, which refers to earlier and more targeted supports to Aboriginal children and families to prevent Aboriginal children from entering care. I want to ask: what is that targeted support, and where will those support services be located? What is the strategy behind those support services in terms of location?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Obviously, the McGowan Labor government is focused on improving outcomes for Aboriginal children and their families and communities. Certainly, there are key reforms taking place within the Department of Communities and its funded services. I might ask Ms Tang to comment, who is probably the appropriate person to provide more information in relation to an answer.

Ms TANG: In relation to engaging with Aboriginal families, I cannot talk in detail about it at the moment, but the tenders for the early intervention strategy closed the week before last and are currently under consideration. In relation to the location of those, we are talking about Fremantle, Rockingham, Mirrabooka, Joondalup, Cannington, Armadale, Perth and Midland. They are areas that are seen as areas for intensive family support, very much going back to basics in relation to prevention of children coming into care. Where families are in crisis or in need, this is taking the service into their homes rather than seeing that they have to remove the children and return them. Generally, in relation to intervention, there is a need to engage more with Aboriginal-controlled organisations. There are not many Aboriginal organisations, but they are increasing and they want to have a stand and take the place of working with Aboriginal families more and more, and that is to be encouraged and supported. We have a strategy within the department to do that. Aboriginal people want to work with organisations that represent them and that understand their culture and connect with them, so part of the reform within the department is how we engage with Aboriginal-controlled organisations and how we co-design with them services so that we can work together. With the early intervention strategies, we do not say that we understand how to do this absolutely, so it is working with them and encouraging them to learn. We often talk about capacity building within working with Aboriginal communities. Capacity building is a two way —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Ms Tang, I might just call a halt to that. The member has indicated to me that she might have a follow-up or more targeted question to ask.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Minister, from that answer, can I take it that there are no support services in regional areas for Aboriginal families? I did not hear one mentioned.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will again ask Ms Tang to comment, and perhaps she can specifically talk about the services in regional Western Australia.

Ms TANG: There are regional services, but the issue for us is the extent of those services; they are limited. Within the regions —

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Sorry to interrupt, but I go back to the intent of my original question about where it says in the budget that there will be earlier and more targeted support for Aboriginal children and families to prevent Aboriginal children from entering care. I know that it is difficult in regional areas; I get that. But I want to know what the department is doing to address that issue.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In regional WA?

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: In regional areas, as they have not been mentioned so far.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Sure. Ms Tang was giving an expansive answer and I am sure she would have got to regions, but, unfortunately, the deputy chair called a halt to it and went back to your question. However, you have asked about regional Western Australia, so I will ask Ms Tang to talk about regional WA.

Ms TANG: I will ask Mr Geddes to pick up; he is the ED of country services. If you want to know the specifics of those services, Mr Geddes is in a better position to answer that question.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I want to know what the targeted support for future services is, not what it is at the moment. The budget indicates —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, I will let you answer that particular aspect or refer it appropriately; if not, we will go to Mr Geddes.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No; I am happy to ask Mr Geddes to provide a response.

Mr GEDDES: As part of the intensive family support service rollout, there is a rollout of those services as part of the tender process into regional WA as well, across all regions. The exact amount of that I cannot give you off the top of my head, but I am happy to provide that at a later date.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In relation to that, because there is a tender process happening at the moment, we cannot tell you where those services will be rolled out, but we can certainly tell you the amounts that will be rolled out in regional Western Australia.

Ms TANG: It is all tied up in the tender process.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So we do not have a figure?

Mr GEDDES: We have the broad figure with us, not the individual figures.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: But in terms of providing the information by way of supplementary, what can we provide to the member?

Ms TANG: We will attempt to provide as much as we can in relation to not compromising the tender process.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The whole process is \$9.6 million for intensive. If we are able to provide by way of supplementary information figures in relation to regional Western Australia, we will provide those by supplementary.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Member, for clarification and not to interrupt, do you seek detail regarding locations and the amount allocated to each location? Is that the question for the purpose of recording the supplementary?

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No A3.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Sorry; we are not able to provide that yet because of the tender process. We might only be able to say that we anticipate doing it in these places and this is the budget, but because there is a tender happening at the moment, different organisations from different regions may well be trying to get different amounts of money, so we cannot give you the specifics that you are requiring. We will give you as much as we can by way of supplementary.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Can I just clarify, minister: is that \$9.6 million for regional Western Australia or overall?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No, that was the whole tender process. If you are clear, Mr Deputy Chair, we will provide information by way of supplementary —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I am very clear, and it is registered, minister.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: With regard again to the same page of budget paper No 2, volume 1, I refer to the fourth paragraph, which relates to reforms in progress that aim to create system-wide shifts, particularly for Aboriginal families. Can you explain what “system-wide shifts” are, specifically in relation to the region you and I both share, the Mining and Pastoral Region? How does that aim to support the families identified in Roebourne, in particular?

[9.40 am]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, thank you for the question. It seems to be a technical term above my pay grade, so I might ask one of the advisers behind me to respond! I think Ms Jackie Tang can respond in the first instance.

Ms TANG: The reform that was commenced two years ago was very much around the need to address out-of-home care, particularly for Aboriginal people. This reform in relation to out-of-home care is progressing. Part of the issue—I understand you have asked specifically about the regions—is about how we identify the needs of children who are coming into care, how we can measure the interventions that occur and what is most appropriate. Given the number of Aboriginal children in care, this is a particular issue for us, acknowledging that we need to work more closely with Aboriginal organisations and, absolutely, Aboriginal communities. I understand your question is around regional and remote, but in regard to the south west settlement that was in the Parliament in June 2015, that is an example of where it is very clear about who government departments should be communicating with and how that should occur for community development, particularly in areas of out-of-home care. Specifically across the Pilbara, there are also similar organisations that the department can work with in relation to services that can be provided. We need to work closely with the Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal individuals to bring about change. Again, I emphasise the point about capacity building; it is equally the departments. We need to embrace and engage with Aboriginal communities to be able to do that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Ms Tang, if you are coming rapidly to a conclusion, I recommend you do that because time is limited and there are other members waiting to ask questions.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, just before you move on, I do not think the honourable member got an answer to the second part of her question, which was in relation to Roebourne, so I might ask Mr Paul Isaachsen if he can make a brief comment and answer that part of the question.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Absolutely.

Mr ISAACHSEN: In relation to the member’s question, part of the reforms that started in the Regional Services Reform Unit and are now part of the Department of Communities relate to how we structure in regional areas, especially the establishment of district leadership groups in those areas. To take both the Kimberley and Pilbara, for example, there are district leadership groups that involve state government agencies, commonwealth agencies and local government, as well as ACCOs and other not-for-profit organisations. We are using those groups through the department as a primary mechanism of engagement on things like out-of-home care and other reforms that we are looking to drive through the department. That is a mechanism we are using across the state, particularly in regional Western Australia, to connect with Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people and how we design our services.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: I refer to page 260 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and in particular on that page the regional community childcare development fund. Can we have an explanation of the cut, obviously, in funding there in the 2018–19 year and beyond to nothing? Can you explain that to me?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: First of all, the regional community childcare development fund is a royalties for regions project aimed at improving the availability and sustainability of community-managed childcare services in regional Western Australia. Stage 1 of the project is complete, with an external evaluation identifying positive outcomes in all the focus areas. Stage 2 is now underway and involves the implementation of the education and care services plan for regional WA during 2017–18. I will ask one of my advisers, Mr Jolly, to answer the financial element of it.

Mr JOLLY: Thank you to the member for the question. The minister touched on the fact that we are currently into stage 2 of this project. It was a time-limited project. Stage 1 is complete and involved, essentially, mapping of services in each of the development commission regions and implemented some grants programs to assist services in those regions to improve their sustainability. Stage 2 of the project is focused on, essentially, building on that foundation that was developed in stage 1 and will have some particular initiatives targeted at improving the sustainability of community-based services in regional locations.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: You talk about sustainability of services there in stage 2 of that project. What will happen then in those out years when there is no funding; how will the department ensure there is sustainability of that service?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you for the question, member. As Mr Jolly said, member, this was a time-limited project. It was funded by the previous government for a period, so we have continued for the same period. Obviously, it has a year to run out. We will evaluate this program moving forward and I am sure, upon successful evaluation, that the department will seek further funding. But at this stage, we are continuing a process started by the previous government. The funding in the budget papers is what it is because of a previous decision by the government. We have not put money into the out years yet. We have not done that in quite a few places but, as members would expect, if it was a time-limited project funded by the previous government, obviously we will evaluate those projects before they finish and for those that are good and delivering, obviously the department will have a keen interest in ensuring that they continue to deliver into the future.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Following on from that, I guess, given the narrative from this government around jobs and local jobs and so on, how will we enable people in regional areas, particularly those with children, to come into the workforce if we are not ensuring services for child care are sustained in those areas? I am a bit concerned how that will impact on that narrative.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will ask Mr Jolly to respond to that, but I make the point again: this budget paper does not say this program is finishing in 2017–18. The budget paper says that the time-limited project funded under the previous government continues to be funded for that time limit. However, I will ask Mr Jolly to expand on that answer.

Mr JOLLY: Thanks to the member for the question. I think the observation is absolutely correct. I think it is well known and accepted that there have been significant issues in terms of sustainability of services in regional locations in Western Australia. This project has endeavoured to provide, I guess, a structure and a foundation for those services in regional locations where, in particular, they can improve their governance arrangements. One of the things that we identified with services in other locations is that they were typically being supported by management committees of parents and members of the community and that there was a fairly significant overhead on those services for each of those management committees to operate the service effectively but also to meet their legislative responsibilities under the relevant laws. So the model that has been trialled through this process, and we are hoping to be able to deploy more broadly, is one that effectively looks to aggregate some of the governance arrangements for those services in regional locations to reduce those overheads and to make it generally more efficient in their operation. To answer your question

more directly, we believe that in doing that, that will improve the sustainability of those services over the longer term.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Minister, you said before the fact that there is no funding in the line item on page 260 from 2018–19 onwards does not mean this program will not continue. I wonder if you can point me to where in the budget this program is continuing or support for regional child care is.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I think I have answered that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I think you have answered that, minister.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: This is a time-limited project. It will be evaluated and, subject to evaluation, the agency, I am sure, will seek further appropriations from government moving forward. If it is a good project, obviously the agency will look for more money for it. Certainly, as a regional member, member, I acknowledge the difficulty of providing childcare services in regional Western Australia. I think it is a good project. It sounds good, so I hope it continues too, subject to a proper evaluation.

[9.50 am]

Hon KYLE McGINN: My question is in regard to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 237, the fifth dot point. The budget paper refers to “becoming a member of the national Our Watch program”. Can the minister explain what the McGowan government is doing to stop violence against women at the start?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I am not accepting points of order, member. I will allow the member to ask the question and the minister to respond. I will adjudicate on the response.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We are here for Child Protection; that is family and domestic violence.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No; FDV falls under the Child Protection portfolio.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is the fourth session we are doing.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will seek clarification as to where it appears.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, I am advised that we can do it under item 4 this afternoon.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: The minister may choose to answer this question now to allow space in that session; if not, we will defer that question to the later session.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am in the hands of the committee. The Department for Child Protection and Family Support is still one area. We will give a brief answer now; and, if the member wants a more fulsome answer, we can give him one in session 4.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: In fairness, I will allow a brief response. Perhaps the member will take another opportunity in the session later this morning.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will ask Ms Harvey to make a comment about that.

Ms HARVEY: Thank you, minister; and thank you, member, for the question. I am very happy to provide a more fulsome answer a bit later in the fourth session. In relation to becoming an official partner of Our Watch, that occurred on 1 May 2017. Through signing on as a member of Our Watch, basically we are signalling a really firm commitment to ending violence against women and their children. Our Watch will provide us with a lot of research, resources, and support in the work the department is going to do in the family and domestic violence area. Specifically, the department provides a large amount of resources for services to address family and domestic violence, particularly preventative services, and we are working on recent election commitments.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 236. I am not sure whether this falls into the same category, but I will go to the line item, if I may. I want to ask a question about the two additional women's refuges. It is titled "Women's Refuges", but I always think of them in terms of children's safety as well, because often women have to flee to refuges with their children. I notice that in the forward estimates there are two planned refuges, which will not come in until 2019. I understand we have only just taken government, but I had hoped that we might have been able to do it quicker than that. I have only a couple of questions, and I will make them brief because I know there is not much time left. In what areas will the two planned refuges be placed? Obviously, the specifics will come later. Given that the refuges will come in the out years, what are we doing now to respond to domestic violence against women and children?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Before you answer that, minister, you might want to ascertain whether you can answer that question directly now or whether you require an adviser who might appear at a later session this morning.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I can answer that now. I answered questions earlier about the male perpetrator service, so it is appropriate.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: That is what I thought. This is a little bit more general.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That is fine. I just wanted to ensure that you get the information you are seeking, member.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It was my understanding that FDV would be dealt with now and that the fourth session was supposed to be Communities, but I guess there will be a bit more leeway in that fourth session to answer more questions.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Answer the question, minister.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: This was a 2017 state election commitment. We will establish two new domestic violence refuges, one to be located in the south west metropolitan corridor and the second in the Peel region. I will ask Ms Harvey to elaborate if I missed out on other things in that question. The member asked about location.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Yes, where they will be located. It seems also that that will not be done until the out years—2019—so what are we as a government doing now to respond to the concerns?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That was the part I missed out. I will point out that we have created a new Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, but I will ask Ms Harvey, who is the person with knowledge of the area, to respond.

Ms HARVEY: I have a bit more information, member. The department is holding fortnightly meetings with Housing to progress the development of the refuges. Quite a bit of work needs to be done from within our funding area to set up the service agreements for those refuges, and also in terms of developing up the model. Quite a lot of work goes into the development of those services to make sure that we get those services right. At the moment, we are looking at the Peel area, and also Beeliar. They are the two areas, to answer your specific question.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: The reason they are in the out years is basically the planning—is this what you are saying?

Ms HARVEY: Yes, that is right.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 241 and the table "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators". Can the minister provide the percentage of clients who received an earlier intervention and family support service whose children did not enter care within 12 months of service completion; and which intervention and family support services are included for the purposes of

this indicator? If the minister cannot provide the answer straight up, given the time, I am happy to take this on notice.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will ask Ms Beamish Burton to provide an answer to at least some of this. I suspect, member, this is a question that we will have to take on notice and provide supplementary information to you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Are you happy to do that?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes. For the purposes of the record, does the member want to restate what she wants us to provide by notice?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Which intervention and family support services are included for the purposes of this indicator? I also want to know the percentage of clients who received an earlier intervention and family support service.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We can certainly provide a response to the first one on notice. We will have to do some work on the second question, but we will endeavour to provide that answer, too. I am happy to agree to that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Much appreciated, minister.

[Supplementary Information No A4.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: In answers to questions asked prior to today's hearing, the minister provided a budget of \$90 000 for independent lawyers. However, the minister indicated that that does not include claims related to criminal injuries' compensation. Why does the budget exclude criminal injuries' compensation?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I ask Ms Beamish Burton to provide an answer.

Ms BEAMISH BURTON: Because the question relates to abuse in care, we excluded the criminal compensation budget from that; it has a separate budget. I do not have that figure with me.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It has a separate budget for criminal injuries' compensation?

Ms BEAMISH BURTON: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So, minister, criminal injuries' compensation claims against the department where a referral is made to an independent lawyer has a separate budget, is what I am hearing. What is that budget?

Ms BEAMISH BURTON: Sorry; I do not have that budget with me at the moment.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Okay. Can we take that on notice, Mr Deputy Chair?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, are you prepared to accept that as a supplementary?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes, I am happy to provide it. Member, just be clear again on what we are providing on notice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The budget for independent lawyers for criminal injuries' compensation claims for the coming financial or current financial year.

[Supplementary Information No A5.]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I bring this session to a close. There will be a five-minute adjournment for the rotation of witnesses. Thank you very much for appearing before the committee today.

Hearing concluded at 10.00 am
