

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2017–18 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS



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

**SESSION FOUR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES — REMAINING FUNCTIONS**

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 12.21 pm

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON

Minister representing the Minister for Community Services, examined:

Mr PAUL WHYTE

Acting Director General, examined:

Mr PAUL ISAACHSEN

Executive Director, Reform and Transformation, examined:

Mr BRAD JOLLY

Executive Director, Regulation and Concessions, examined:

Mr LIAM CARREN

Chief Finance Officer, examined:

Ms VANESSA HARVEY

Director, Strategy, Research and Initiatives, examined:

Ms PENNY KENNEDY

Director, Community Funding, examined:

Mr DAVID SETTELMAIER

Senior Policy Adviser, Minister for Community Services, examined:

The CHAIR: Members, welcome to this part of the hearing for the remaining functions of the Department of Communities. On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you here. Can the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIR: Let the record show that all witnesses have indicated that they have. 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. 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. 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.

Minister, do you have an opening statement?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just make a brief point. I have advisers here with me in relation to the volunteering, veterans, youth, women and seniors portfolios, and also the prevention of family and domestic violence portfolio. We can also answer questions in relation to the whole of the Department of Communities, so hopefully that satisfies members. If I do not have

advisers here, if we have missed someone—I do not think we have—then obviously we will take some questions on notice.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I refer the minister to page 241 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the table headed “Service Summary”. I have a particular line of interest in service 10, “Delivery of Community Services, Grants and Resources”. First of all, I just want to clarify the nomenclature around this. Does this encompass support provided to neighbourhood centres and community resource centres through what may have been or still is known as the community and neighbourhood development service? Is that accurate?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I thank the member for the question. I will ask Ms Kennedy, who is the director of community funding, to provide a response to that question.

Ms KENNEDY: Correct; yes, it does. It includes all the community, neighbourhood and development centres.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: May I enquire as to the reason for the \$8.5 million funding reduction between the 2017–18 budget estimate year and the 2018–19 estimate?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Certainly, from the 2018–19 forward estimate to the 2017–18 budget estimate, there is a \$8.47 million figure that I can talk to first, and I might ask Ms Kennedy to then supplement the information. The \$8.47 million variance is mainly due to funding for the Aboriginal community patrols program ceasing in 2017–18. Also, there was Local Projects, Local Jobs money—grant expenditure—that is expended in one year, so it does not appear in the year after. There has also been a change to the enhanced transition to school project; that change is about \$15 million. I will ask Ms Kennedy if there is anything else that she can add to that.

Ms KENNEDY: With the \$58.3 million, there is a difference there because corporate overheads have also been incorporated into that. The figure of \$41.4 million that is invested in community service organisations was taken from the annual report of the former Department of Local Government and Communities. There is some attribution in that amount and there is an approximate difference of \$6 million. That includes when the department split as a result of the machinery of government, so appropriating the budget post becoming the Department of Communities, an element of that included the money from the Office of Multicultural Interests and local government grants for the capacity building program. That is as a result of the transitional side of things, because some was taken from the annual report, which accounts for that variance.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thank you. What I was attempting to clarify was that these were not savings booked from the potential closure of a number of neighbourhood centres, which is going to be a consequence of the funding model reform.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The short answer, member, is no.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Can I just clarify, minister, that that does not indicate anticipated savings or that none of these neighbourhood centres are likely to close as a consequence of this reform?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: My advice is that the funding will remain the same and there will be a tender process going out about which services provide the services moving forward. So, there is no change in funding, but the tender process could unearth a range of things.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Is the minister or perhaps one of his advisers in a position to guarantee the longevity of existing neighbourhood centres within the metropolitan area at least? I know there are regional members here who have a particular regional interest.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I make the point, member, that this program has not been out to tender before. A decision was made by the previous government, which this government is continuing with,

and that was that it is probably healthy to go through a tender process to see who in both metropolitan and regional Western Australia should be delivering services in this space. That decision was made by the previous government and it is being continued now, and that is where we are in the process.

[12.30 pm]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Okay, minister. Bearing until mind the tight time frame, Madam Chair, I might just ask a —

The CHAIR: This is your last question, member.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Minister, in relation to the scale of this department and the Premier's intention to apply key performance indicator metrics against senior executives' and particularly directors generals' salaries, can I ask how that process is proceeding as it applies to Mr Searle, who, unfortunately is not here today, but adequately represented by the acting director general. What stage is that process up to and what kind of KPIs are likely to be included with respect to the size of the department?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you; member for the question. I first of all apologise. Mr Searle is not here because he had a knee operation, so he is out of action for a number of weeks. Of course, anyone who has been around here for a very long time knows he is a warrior and appreciates the opportunity to talk and answer questions for members in relation to the budget. In relation to the key performance indicators, between ministers and the director general, those conversations are happening. I think a resource agreement is being agreed upon between the minister and Minister McGurk as the lead minister in this portfolio area but also other ministers with portfolio responsibility in Communities are also involved in that process. That process is underway, albeit because Mr Searle is off at the moment, the final agreement has not been signed yet.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 236 "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" and the first dot point which refers to the machinery of government changes. I have a quick question first that I hope can be answered with a yes or no. Is there any intention at any point in the next three years to incorporate the Mental Health Commission within the Department of Communities?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No; there is not.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Fantastic. Thank you. Sorry; you are talking?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: There is not, to my understanding. I am involved in conversations but my adviser has quite rightly pointed out that there could be further machinery-of-government changes into the future but certainly Labor made a commitment at the election which was a standalone mental health agency. I know the Premier is very keen to ensure that we are delivering on our election commitments.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Fantastic. Thank you. I will move on to other points of the machinery-of-government changes. Has any funding been allocated to move youth justice to the Department of Communities and how much is that? I asked some other questions through the Department of Corrective Services or the Department of Justice.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I ask Mr Carren to provide a response to that answer, please.

Mr CARREN: There is no specific provision in the Department of Communities' budget for the movement of the youth justice function. I assume that is your question. Is it about the actual move, the cost of the move or about the —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Also which part of communities is it intended to come under?

Mr CAREN: The budget has not been moved yet. The budget still resides within the Department of Justice. There is no provision in the Communities budget for the youth justice functions yet. That budget has not been moved over yet. As to where youth justice will reside within the Department of Communities' budget is to be determined.

Hon ALISON XAMON: When is it expected that this tranche of machinery-of-government changes will have been completed?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: My understanding is that the discussions are ongoing. Minister McGurk's office, as the lead minister for Department of Communities, is involved in discussions with the Minister for Justice, has a commitment to doing it, but we are trying to work through the issues at the moment.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I move to page 237, the thirteenth dot point. I want to ask —

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, how many is that from the bottom?

Hon ALISON XAMON: That is the last one. I number them all. My question is: do we still have, minister, a functioning pay equity unit, and if so, where is it located and how many dedicated FTE does it possess?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you for the question. I might ask Vanessa Harvey to respond to that question on my behalf.

Ms HARVEY: Thank you; minister. The pay equity unit was based in the previous Department of Commerce and I am not completely clear of the status of it at the moment. I would have to look into it.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is it your understanding that a pay equity unit still exists?

Ms HARVEY: It is my understanding that there is a pay equity function within what used to be the Department of Commerce but there have been machinery-of-government changes in relation to that department so I would have to get back on that.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I suggest that because it does not fall under our portfolio area, you place the question on notice through the process and perhaps ask the Minister for Commerce. I will ensure, if it is not in that response, you get a response to that answer.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Moving on then. Page 237, the eleventh dot point, which is the third from the bottom, with a proportion of Western Australia's population over 60 increasing, how much additional funding has been allocated to advocacy and/or support services to meet the needs of the increasing number of older Western Australians? I have a specific interest in additional funding that has been allocated to address issues of elder abuse as I know my parliamentary colleague sitting next to me, Hon Nick Goiran, also does.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I might have to take that question on notice. We will provide that information by way of supplementary.

[Supplementary Information No A11.]

The CHAIR: Can you briefly summarise the detail of that?

Hon ALISON XAMON: I want to know specifically what additional funding has been allocated to advocacy and/or support services to meet the needs of the increasing number of older Western Australians. As part of that, I also want to know the specifics around services addressing elder abuse.

The CHAIR: I need to leave you there. I hope I will get back to all of you as well. We move to Hon Martin Pritchard.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: It has been answered, thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: I meant Hon Martin Aldridge.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I would like to ask some questions about the regional community childcare development fund. Have we got advisers here who will be able to assist me with that? I understand the government has made a budget decision to discontinue the operating grants and retain strategic grants for 2017–18 at least and then no funding into the forward estimates. Has there been any review or analysis done by the department in terms of to what extent this fund has assisted with the sustainability or quality of regional childcare services?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Do have you a page number?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I can give you several if you like. Page 260 of budget paper No 2 or page 224 of budget paper No 3.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I only ask because this issue was addressed in an earlier sitting. I have some notes on it. I want to find them. Thank you for being helpful and telling me where it was. My understanding in relation to that figure was that it was time-limited funding by the previous government. As you quite rightly pointed out, there is money in the 2017–18 budget estimate. I think what I said earlier on was that that program will be reviewed. That program will be reviewed in this calendar year and, subject to the evaluation, the department will make a decision on the future of that project. There was a number of other questions raised earlier but recognising you were not here, obviously, I am happy to —

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I would have thought they would fall under the other functions category rather than Child Protection or Housing or Disability Services. Nevertheless, the \$50 000 you have allocated in strategic grants for 2017–18 for evaluation, is that for the evaluation of this fund or the evaluation of something else.

[12.40 pm]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, thank you for that question. I will ask Mr Jolly to provide an answer to that question.

Mr JOLLY: The answer is yes; it is for the evaluation of stage 2. There was an evaluation undertaken for stage 1 as part of the acquittal process for stage 1 funding. That evaluation broadly found that the expenditure through stage 1 had been effective. As I mentioned earlier, stage 2 is intended to build on the work done in stage 1, but, yes, \$50 000 is allocated for evaluation of stage 2.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Could I receive by way of supplementary information a copy of the stage 1 evaluation of the fund?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We might have to take that question on notice.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: That is what I asked.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: If we can, we will provide it by way of supplementary information. I am just not sure, as I am not the responsible minister. I obviously have to check with the responsible minister whether there is any reason it could not be released. My advisers think it can so we will certainly try to provide it to you.

[*Supplementary Information No A12.*]

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Given there are no operating grants to regional childcare centres this year—I understand the operating grants were up to \$15 000—how does the department intend to assist regional childcare centres to meet their obligations under the national quality framework?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I again ask Mr Jolly to provide an answer to that question.

Mr JOLLY: Certainly, stage 2 of the RCCDF program will assist services through the provision of funding to improve the governance's arrangements for services in regional locations. That is very much intended to improve the viability and sustainability of services in those locations. More generally, in terms of support provided to assist services to meet their regulatory obligations under the national quality framework, the education and care regulatory unit undertakes an assessment rating process of all services. Those assessment ratings occur currently on about a three yearly cycle, which is what we are aiming for at the moment. As part of that process, one or more officers from the department, from the regulatory unit, would visit each service, review the quality improvement plan associated with that service and then assess the service delivery, and then provide a written report back to that service about how it is performing against the national quality framework and, within that, get some indication how they might improve the service of their quality, going forward. That is essentially embedded in the regulatory process in the implementation of the national quality framework.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Was there an expectation that operating grants would be available this financial year, or was it never the case that operating grants would be available in 2017–18?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Again, I ask Mr Jolly to provide a response to that.

Mr JOLLY: Certainly, the proposal that is currently in place has a particular focus, as I say, on allocating funding to improve the sustainability of services in regional locations, and that work was commenced in stage 1. I guess one of the reasons for the transition from operational to strategic grants was that during stage 1 there was very little take-up of strategic grants, and the strategic grants are really intended to provide a response to more systemic issues across the sector. One of the reasons there was little take-up of the strategic grants in stage 1 was that there really was not, if you like, a framework in place for that to occur. One of the projects conducted in stage 1 was to develop a regional children services plan for each of the nine regions. That was intended to identify issues in each of the nine regions. Also, a statewide regional plan was developed, which identified issues that are broader and common and systemic across the regional sector more generally. The intention is that those strategic grants are to be applied to address some of the recommendations identified in that regional statewide plan.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I ask the minister to turn to 236 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2. He will see that at page 236 the government has gone to great extent to list under "Stopping Family and Domestic Violence" quite a number of election commitments and the funding that has been provided to those election commitments. I congratulate the government for going to that level of detail. Minister, one of the government's election commitments was to establish another Communicare Breathing Space. I notice it is not listed there. Is the government still intending to fulfil that commitment?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, thank you for your question. Not that it has any bearing on this, but we briefly touched on this earlier. The male perpetrators of family domestic service line item refers to that. There is \$200 000 in the budget for it this year, and that is planning money. But I will ask Ms Harvey, who has some further information she can provide in relation to that question, to answer.

Ms HARVEY: We were asked a question in an earlier session on this. We were talking about Communicare Breathing Space and we were asked whether there was a waiting list for that service.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am not interested in whether there is a waiting list; what I wanted to know is whether the government is intending to fulfil its commitment to another —

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The answer is yes. Apparently, \$200 000 is to be spent on planning for this service, so the service, presumably, is going to continue into the future, but there is no budget line item for the out years. Is there a reason for that?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: As the member has correctly pointed out, this was a 2017 state election commitment. The \$200 000 is funding to plan and develop the new male perpetrator support model, to provide a crisis response to domestic violence perpetrators, supported case management, and a behavioural change program. It is the intention, following this planning work being undertaken, for the department to seek further funds in the out years. The planning work will dictate what quantum of funding is needed in the out years, and so the agency will seek further funding from government through the ERC process, moving forward.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Page 235 sets out the total appropriations for the out years. Clearly, those figures are wrong, because your government wants to fulfil its commitment to fund another Communicare Breathing Space. It is doing the planning work now. It is costing \$200 000 to do that planning work.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No, the figures are not wrong. The figures are correct at this point in time. You would know that governments make decisions on the budget from year to year. Some programs cease and some programs run out; government continues to make decisions on a year-to-year basis. What I said was, there is \$200 000 this year. The agency will seek further funding, moving forward.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The government promised to establish two specialised one-stop hubs. Why is that not listed under the election commitments on page 236?

[12.50 pm]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, there are some business cases being worked on. Again, another election commitment from the government. There are some business cases being worked on at this stage, and the agency is hopeful of submitting those business cases in relation to those projects, moving forward. I guess we have made commitments at the election, but the commitment is to deliver those commitments in this term of government. So this is seven months in, this is our first budget and we will have further budgets ahead, but, hopefully, you will see an announcement in relation to that commitment in future budgets.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So why is there a difference, minister, then between the Communicare Breathing Space commitment, where you have allocated \$200 000 of funding for planning in this financial year, and the two specialised one-stop hubs on which you say there is some business case work being done at the moment? That business case working is not being done for free. Somebody is doing some work there. So why would there not also be a “planning” budget to fulfil that commitment? Is one less important than the other?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I certainly was not saying that, member. What I was going to say is thank you for your question. I will ask the acting director general to provide a response in relation to that question.

Mr WHYTE: In the first instance, the \$200 000 that is allocated is required because of the comprehensive nature of the business case and the fact that there likely will be a capital response to it. That will require quite a lot of detail and specialist information. The latter will be undertaken within existing resources, so within existing policy and planning resources of the agency.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: A final one on the election commitments, minister. One of the election commitments was to create a secure database for information sharing between the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, WA Police, the law courts, the Department of Health, the Department of Local Government, and the Department of Communities. I asked yesterday—you

might recall when you were in a similar position in the Police session—what the status was with regard to the secure database. I would ask for an update in this session as to whether the government is intending to fulfil that commitment; and, if so, what is the current status?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I might ask Ms Harvey if she could provide a response to that question.

Ms HARVEY: There has been some consultation commenced with other agencies on that particular election commitment. There has also been a suggestion that we would take that election commitment into consideration along with the development of the hubs that you mentioned before, because in order for those hubs to function effectively, we would need that sort of secure database. So, they will need to be looked at to some extent in tandem.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Can I just ask that that question be taken on notice with respect to that? The question on notice that would be taken, Madam Chair, with the indulgence of you and the minister, is that I have just been told that there has been some consultation that has taken place in respect of this secure database. I would like to know on what dates that consultation has taken place and who has been consulted.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We can take that question on notice and provide the information by way of supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A13.*]

The CHAIR: Member, I need to move on to Hon Colin Tincknell, with the hope that I can come back to you.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I am looking for answers on a very tough issue; this is what this is all about. On page 237, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, fourth dot point, I refer to the report “How Does Roebourne Compare?” researched and published by the University of Western Australia and discussed in the article on 19 September in *The Australian*, “\$53 million spent but gap widens in troubled town of Roebourne”. The report notes that 29 government agencies have spent \$53.6 million on services for 789 Aboriginal people in the town. I know this is a very tough issue. My question is: can the minister give us a breakdown of the state-supplied services, and a list of which ones were provided by external non-government organisations—NGOs?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, first of all, I indicate that I cannot comment on those articles that you referred to because I have not got them. In relation to Roebourne, though, there is some cross-government work happening. The state government is taking the issues in that community very seriously, and in fact the police commissioner was there recently, as have been other senior executive members of government. I ask Mr Isaachsen to make a comment as the executive director of reform and transformation.

Mr ISAACHSEN: Some of the work which is referred to in the UWA report to which the member refers was undertaken in the previous government, and some work that was commissioned between the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the commonwealth Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. That report certainly was available online and I assume still is, but if it is not, we could certainly be able to provide that to the member and that might provide some of the answers that you were seeking.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: That would be great. Yes, thank you.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Just confirming, Chair, we are going to provide that information by way of supplementary and we are happy to do it.

[*Supplementary Information No A14.*]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Just following on with that: could you also share whether the NGOs—this is a tough question—would be considered to provide those services again, given the evidence that the fly in, fly out model does not seem to be delivering results?

Mr ISAACHSEN: The services provided in Roebourne by non-government agencies are a mixture of agencies that are located in Roebourne, including some Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in Roebourne, others that operate out of Karratha, and a small number that operate from elsewhere. But the primary focus is through organisations that are based either in Roebourne or in Karratha. That probably does not quite get to the heart of the question, but the service provision that comes from outside the region is relatively small.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Also, can the minister please supply a detailed breakdown of how much of that expenditure of the Department of Communities will be spent on preventive programs delivered by the public sector, as well as the programs supplied by the tendered NGOs? By “preventive” we refer to programs that actively support Western Australians not to fall into a situation where intervention from the department becomes necessary.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is very comprehensive, member, and we will be working for weeks to provide information to some of your questions; however, we will have to provide that question on notice.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Yes. I would be very happy with that. Thank you very much.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I just make the point that the Department of Communities has taken a significant number of questions on notice, and I have indicated we would provide supplementary information. I would ask members to be as kind to us as possible because there will be people working extremely hard over the next two weeks chasing paper to ensure that we are rightly giving answers. I just make that point.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: For sure.

The CHAIR: Yes, and I am sure if the department is unable to meet the requirements, they can tell us before the due date. I appreciate the volume that is coming through. It will be A15 for that group of information.

[Supplementary Information No A15.]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Look, obviously, we are all here, we would like the finances for that major problem.

Can the minister also supply a breakdown on how much the department is planning to distribute to the Western Australian Council of Social Service, what services will be provided for the funding, and how the department plans to measure the return on investment for any contracts arranged?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, you do not have a line item for that one, do you? I think we do have some notes in our file in relation to it. Do you have a specific line item?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Look, it is on the same line. It is to do with page 236, “Significant Issues Impacting on the Agency”, third dot point.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is okay. I was not sure whether you had a specific line item that mentioned WACOSS somewhere that would help us find it in our file.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: It is to do with the expansion of the non-government sector. Page 236 —

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes, that last dot point.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: The third dot point.

[1.00 pm]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will ask Ms Kennedy whether she can provide some sort of answer to that, and some of it we might have to take notice.

Ms KENNEDY: The department works very comprehensively with WACOSS as a key stakeholder to support us in our contract management to provide policy advice and advocacy. It is very much a symbiotic kind of relationship where we have a strong mutual need for each other. We currently fund WACOSS for \$755 000 per annum. Their contract is predominantly around that sector support. It expires on 30 June next year. We are currently in the scoping and analysis stage thinking about what their role will be in the newly formed Department of Community Services. Their role may become more expansive given that there will be a new, much larger community services portfolio to support.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I will be very quick. I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 236, and the heading “Spending Changes”. Under “Election Commitments” there is a line item “Local Projects Local Jobs”. Is the minister able to provide a list of all the successful or unsuccessful projects assessed by the Department of Communities? Could the minister also table any due diligence processes that led to the success or failure of those projects? Like some other departments, were any risk-based approaches taken in assessing the adequacy of planning on all projects; and, if so, what approach was taken by the Department of Community Services in particular?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I thought the member said it would be a quick one! I do not think it was a very quick one. I make the point again, as I have made in previous sessions, that Local Projects, Local Jobs was an election commitment of this government, so no work was done previously by any government agencies. These were commitments made by Labor in opposition that we committed to delivering in government. In relation to the grants themselves, I can provide, at least by way of supplementary information, those grants that have been announced so far in the community space. In relation to the future, the agencies are involved in the grants acquittal process. The agency basically acquits the process, and we ensure that the grants agreements are signed. The agency negotiates those grant agreements, acquits them, and makes sure that all government accountability processes are followed in relation to the acquittals of the grant process. I think that is really all I can say. Ms Kennedy has some extra information that she can provide now.

Ms KENNEDY: I do not have a list here, but that can be supplied. All the projects were approved by the Expenditure Review Committee and cabinet. A due diligence process was applied for all organisations that were recommended, including verifying their legal entity status. Throughout the project verification stage, probity and accounting standards were applied in the sense that quotations had to be supplied to ensure that proper and appropriate purchasing protocols took place. On the acquittal note, once they are acquitted, an income and expenditure statement will be required, signed off by the CEO. There are often other auditing processes around the grants acquittal process as well.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I confirm that we will be providing a list of the grants that have been announced so far.

[*Supplementary Information No A16.*]

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Given that no assessment was done by the agencies on the viability of any of those projects, does the minister intend to review in due course the government spend on those projects to ensure that they were viable in terms of the community need?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I think that is probably an issue for Treasury and Finance, because it went to the Expenditure Review Committee of cabinet, so that question might more appropriately be directed in that session.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: So the minister does not intend to review any of the projects delivered under the Department of Communities?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I can ask Mr Whyte to comment in relation to the role of the Department of Communities moving forward.

Mr WHYTE: In terms of specific projects, the department adopts a project methodology. That includes a review of each project in terms of the cost, the scope, the time and whether the benefits have been delivered. At a specific project level, that is undertaken for specific funded initiatives.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I refer again to budget paper No 2, volume 2, page 236, and the heading “Spending Changes”. Under “Election Commitments” there is a line item “Respectful Relationship Programs in Schools”. Can the minister enlighten me as to what that is and where it is intended to be rolled out?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, I probably can. I understand that Ms Harvey can provide a response now.

Ms HARVEY: We are currently in talks with the Department of Education to identify what sorts of respectful relationship-type programs are currently being delivered in schools and looking at best practice in other jurisdictions. We are also tapping into the expertise of Our Watch and the resources they have developed in this area on respectful relationship education. There has been quite a lot of work done in that area across other jurisdictions and also internationally about programs that work really well with children in schools to develop respectful relationships, which we obviously see as a key way of helping to prevent family and domestic violence—it is an early intervention prevention program. We have \$1 million in funding for that and we are really just determining between us what sort of program we would want to implement.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Where will it be delivered?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We do not have a list of the schools yet where we will be delivering it; however, I can assure the member that it will be delivered in regional Western Australia as well as the metropolitan area.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I refer to page 236, the heading “Election Commitments” and the line item “Local Projects Local Jobs”. This may need to be provided as supplementary information. To the extent that the minister has not already taken this question on notice in the previous question, I note the amounts of \$539 000 in the 2016–17 year delivered since this government came to office and the 2017–18 estimate of \$1.77 million. Can the minister provide an itemised breakdown of those projects, not just those that have been announced, but those that are in this budget? I am asking for that to the extent that that has not already been asked.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: We can provide a breakdown, bearing in mind that I am not the minister with responsibility for this portfolio. My advice is that we can provide a breakdown of that information as far as it relates to those grants that have been announced previously. I am not at liberty to commit to providing notice of decisions that have not been announced previously, bearing in mind that it was an ERC in-cabinet decision. Therefore, until there is an announcement, I cannot provide it.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It is in the budget. Surely it has been through ERC and so it does exist, or is it just a slush fund?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Member, every dollar in there has been committed to.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: We want to know what it has been committed to.

The CHAIR: Thanks, minister and member—temperature down, please.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I can tell the member that some 35 projects were supported in 2016–17, and in 2017–18 a further 53 projects will be supported. I can provide the information as I have suggested. In fact, I think I have agreed to that already.

The CHAIR: You have.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes. I said earlier that I will be providing by way of supplementary a list of those projects that have been announced.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Okay; thanks very much. Again, this will have to be taken on notice, I suspect: what departmental resources, if any, were used on these announcements, including media announcements, artwork or preparation of presentation cheques or other promotional activity?

[1.10 pm]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am happy to take that question on notice, but I make the point, though, that certainly no department was involved in designing cheques, which I think you were alluding to and I think you were alluding to —

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Those promotional cheques, yes.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: — cheques that have appeared in previous debates here in this chamber over a few weeks, but I will certainly take the full question —

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: If you can get that advice and respond accordingly, that would be great.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I have to agree to do it, so what I was going to say is that I am happy to agree to taking that last question on notice and providing the information by way of supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A17.*]

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I go back to page 235. I notice you have got four ministers here. If you could pass on my best wishes to Grahame Searle; I am sorry he is laid up but he is probably in a better place, because if he was back here he would be reporting to four ministers across 10 different portfolios.

The CHAIR: We are running out of time, member.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: My two quick questions are this. Firstly, if there is a conflict of demand from a couple of ministers—let us say the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Disabilities—who gets priority?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can I assure the member that in this new McGowan Labor government, we are working in a very collaborative and collegiate fashion and so all ministers get access to the new director general. But I am also very pleased to say that each of the portfolio areas has representative people on the executive of the new agency. I also make the point that the Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services is deemed the lead minister in the agency. She is the minister who takes responsibility for cross-agency questions. She would be the person who would possibly have the most contact with the director general. However, all of us have great access to him and we have great access to the executive.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Okay. So when Her Majesty's loyal opposition wants to ask questions about what is happening with your combining of HR and IT functions and how marvellously well that is going—sort of an Office of Shared Services—type arrangement—is the person we ask the Minister for Communities?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Certainly, the Minister for Communities would be the person who would answer a question like that.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: You would not want to answer it, would you?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am very happy to answer whatever you would like me to answer, honourable member, with the exception of those things that are caught up in cabinet processes, which I cannot answer.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: One of the election commitments outlined on page 236 of the budget papers refers to providing culturally appropriate support services to Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse female victims. Can you advise if any existing non-government organisation has been identified to receive this funding?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The answer is no, not yet.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Well, how can that be the case, minister? You have got \$64 000—sorry; I apologise—\$407 000 identified in this year's budget and then there is \$400 000 available in the next few years, but we do not know who you are giving the money to. Is that right?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is correct, member. We are working through a process at the moment to identify a suitable service provider who can provide this. Without being flippant, can I say that there are plenty of months left in this financial year and we anticipate that work continuing. We certainly intend to spend that money in this financial year.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Who is in charge of that process that you have spoken of?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The family and domestic violence unit of the Department of Communities is the unit responsible for this project.

The CHAIR: On that note, this part of the hearing has concluded.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript, within seven days of the hearing. Responses to these questions are 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 members have any unasked questions, I ask them to submit these via the new electronic lodging system on POWAnet site by 12 noon on Monday, 23 October 2017. Once again, I thank you for your attendance.

Hearing concluded at 1.15 pm
