

Chairman; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Mr John Day; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr David Templeman; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Frank Alban; Ms Margaret Quirk

Division 58: Child Protection, \$483 475 000 —

Ms L.L. Baker, Chairman.

Mr J.H.D. Day, Minister for Planning representing the Minister for Child Protection.

Mr T.M. Murphy, Director General.

Mr P. Byrne, Executive Director, Corporate and Business Services.

Ms P. Beamish Burton, Manager, Management Accounting.

Ms K. Benham, Executive Director, Policy and Learning.

Mr J.T. Peckitt, Director, Business Support and Coordination

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow.

It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee’s consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item program or amount in the current division. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister’s cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by Friday, 8 June 2012. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk’s office.

I now ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, minister. We will start with the member for Joondalup.

[Mr J.M. Francis took the chair.]

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I refer to “Efficiency Dividend” at the bottom of page 699. How will the government deliver that efficiency dividend?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The efficiency dividend has been put in place by the government as part of the preparation of the budget overall and to ensure that services, where there is a priority, are able to be delivered—in some cases there will be new programs and new allocations—with the intention that existing services provided are done in the most efficient manner possible. In relation to the Department for Child Protection, it should be remembered that there has been a substantial growth in the allocation to the department over the past four years. Since this government has been in office, the growth in allocation has been 57 per cent. In the last year of the previous government there was a fairly significant extra allocation, although there was not much in the previous years of that government. The department has had a substantial increase in resources. The way in which the efficiency dividend will be funded effectively has not been determined as yet. That will be a matter for the minister to work through with the director general and the department over the next few weeks or so and, obviously, decisions will be made prior to 1 July. Those decisions have not been made at this stage.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Is the minister telling us that a dividend has been put in the budget without any consultation with the minister or the department as to how it might be achieved? Is it a case of “Here’s your cap; tell us how you’re going to do it by 1 July” with the departments having to find it regardless of whether they have efficiencies or excesses that they can trim?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: There is consultation and involvement by the minister responsible for this department because the minister, like all of us, is a member of cabinet. The budget was approved by cabinet prior to it being introduced into Parliament by the Treasurer. To that extent, of course, there is consultation and knowledge. As I said earlier, the specific details of how the change will be put into effect will be considered over the next few weeks and in most cases, I presume, will take effect from 1 July.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I find it very strange that an efficiency dividend has been put in the budget without consultation with the department. Not one minister has been able to answer this question; rather, they have all responded with “1 July”. The budget papers are before us now, but we are being told to wait until 1 July before

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we know where the cuts will be made. The cuts involve \$7.6 million in the first year, \$11.7 million in the second, \$16.75 million in the third and \$20 million in 2015–16. That is a significant cut, particularly for an organisation like the Department for Child Protection. An ever-increasing number of young people come into the care of the state every year. We know our social workers are under extreme pressure—extreme pressure—yet the government has not consulted with the department about how those cuts will be made. “Efficiency dividend” is just a fancy name for a cut.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Joondalup, ask your question.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Where are the cuts coming from?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The member used the word “strange”. If it is strange, it is no stranger than when a three per cent efficiency dividend was announced by the previous government during the 2008 election campaign, which was matched by the then opposition. In other words, it was the policy of both the Labor and Liberal Parties. If it is strange now, it was strange then when it was a Labor idea. The other point that should be made is that the three per cent efficiency dividend was put into effect in 2008-09. It was managed and the government is confident that this two per cent change will be managed as well. It needs to be borne in mind that there has been an increase in the overall allocation to the department. A normal growth factor is built into the budget. It is not as if there is an actual reduction in funds. Obviously, the amount of funding available to the Department for Child Protection and all the departments, including Health—Education is subject to only one per cent—are subject to the two per cent change. It has been put into effect across the whole of government and it will be managed as it has been in the past.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I refer to “Major Spending Changes” on page 699 and to the figures for the “Growth in demand for Child Protection services”, which is an estimated \$15 million next year and \$63.1 million over the next four years. Can the minister provide more details of the substantial growth and demand the department has experienced?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The government has in fact provided the Department for Child Protection with an additional \$63 million in funding over four years, commencing with \$15 million in the budget we are considering here for the 2012-13 financial year. We do acknowledge that the department experienced a significant increase in child protection activity in 2011-12, which reflects the trend of recent years. The increasing activity can be attributed to a number of factors, including drug and alcohol abuse in the community, family and domestic violence, mental health problems and the introduction of mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse. That is obviously having an impact. The department is responding to that. There have been joint initiatives with Western Australia Police, which will continue. There are improved assessment and investigation processes, and greater community awareness of the issue of child abuse and neglect; therefore, there is presumably a greater likelihood that such problems will be reported. That is an overview. I will ask the director general to add some additional information, given he has the responsibility to manage these issues.

[2.10 pm]

Mr T.M. Murphy: We are dealing with an increase in demand, as the minister has indicated. It is important to know that as well as receiving additional funding to meet that demand, the way we work is important in matching our resources to the work coming in and managing that work in a way that is both effective and minimises the most expensive part of our work, which is children coming into care. Our major strategy in that respect, having introduced a way of doing child protection work, is the Signs of Safety framework. This child protection practice framework has seen a significant reduction in the number of care and protection applications taken to court, measured on a per thousand basis, in the face of a larger amount of work coming into the department and a substantially larger number of what we call safety and wellbeing assessments—that is, assessments in investigations of abuse. The number of children in care last year rose by six per cent. The figure was four per cent the previous year. That occurred in the face of a 91 per cent increase in the number of safety and wellbeing assessments being conducted. This is not entirely a money issue. In this difficult area of human service, it is also about working in the most effective way.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to “Capital appropriation” on page 699, specifically the efficiency dividend. The minister is saying there have been no cuts identified as part of the two per cent efficiency dividend.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I think the member is trying to put words into my mouth somewhat. I indicated that the budget allocated for the Department for Child Protection will need to be managed carefully and worked within. There has been an overall increase. The two per cent amount will need to be factored into the details of how the department’s allocation is split up and used over the next 12 months. That will be considered by the senior officers of the department and discussed with the Minister for Child Protection, between now and the beginning of July.

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Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Is the minister aware that areas have already been identified for cuts by the director general, and in the media yesterday that was highlighted in a budget presentation. One area that was identified was districts not getting a sum of \$1 million across the organisation to meet the dividend required. Over-the-counter financial assistance will also be targeted. These are out there already as areas identified for these two per cent cuts. Why can the minister not admit they are already being discussed so that he can identify and confirm them?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: As I said, the details of the two per cent efficiency dividend will be considered with more finality over the next few weeks or so. No doubt decisions will be made between now and 1 July —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Minister —

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Hang on a minute; I have not finished answering the question.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mandurah!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The question was: has the minister identified areas, and the areas that have been identified. Why don't you just admit it?

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mandurah! Let the minister —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: You are going to do this, are you? As Chair, you are going to jump up —

The CHAIRMAN: I will tell you what I am going to do right now, member for Mandurah; I am going to call you to order twice.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: How many?

The CHAIRMAN: Twice. Don't answer back. Let the minister finish answering, and I will give you the call again. But I will not have people talking over the top of each other—clear?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I was going to reiterate that this two per cent figure needs to be seen in the context of a 57 per cent increase in the allocation to the Department for Child Protection since this government has been in office. I suspect that is more than any other activity of government; and if it is not more, it is certainly right up the top. It is probably proportionately more than has been allocated to the enormous Health budget—although the actual quantum of course is less. That is a very substantial proportionate increase. Two per cent in the context of a 57 per cent increase is not really all that much of a major issue, albeit the department will obviously have to manage that. It is not easy dealing with all of the demands and pressures on government across a range of areas—no-one pretends that. I am sure the member is very well aware of that, from his previous experience. I will ask Mr Murphy to add some additional comments to whatever comments he might have made publicly. If the member wants to discuss the issue of transport of children in taxis, we are certainly happy to do that. I will make the overall observation that from what I have seen in the media reports, what the department has put into effect is certainly not anything surprising at all and probably involves a reasonable use of taxpayers' funds, no doubt with appropriate safeguards in place. Like all government agencies, this department has the responsibility to do things in the most efficient manner it reasonably can while obviously responding to the needs that exist and managing risks in an appropriate way. They have the professional responsibility of doing that. I will ask Mr Murphy to add some more information.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Can I just ask, through the Chair, about my first question. We will come to the taxis issue shortly. The minister brought up the taxis issue. The opposition has questions on that, but I am not interested in a response to that at the moment because it was not what my question was. My question was very specific: have areas been identified to deliver the two per cent efficiency dividend? We clearly have evidence that areas have been identified, and all I want from the minister, and the director general particularly, is to identify those areas that have already been identified as part of the two per cent efficiency dividend. That is the question I asked. The minister has not answered that question yet, but I think he should.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The member has just taken up additional time that really was not necessary, given I had just handed over to Mr Murphy to provide some of the information the member wants.

Mr T.M. Murphy: As a responsible government department, we will not wake up on 30 June and guess how to make these efficiency dividends work. We have to identify areas, discuss them and test their viability. In the department of which I am in charge that means sharing some information with staff. I am sure the opposition will play a constructive role in the information that is being shared with it by my staff—I certainly hope so. The particular —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Sorry; what exactly does the director general mean by that statement?

Mr T.M. Murphy: I am sorry if it was unclear, member for Mandurah —

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Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Director general, I think you need to go through the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mandurah and director general! Member for Mandurah, I will continue to give you the call until you are satisfied, but all I am asking is that you do not talk over the top of each other. If we give the director general, through the minister, the chance to answer the question, we will see how that answer shapes up for you and I will give you the call then. Through the minister, director general.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Mr Murphy is answering.

[2.20 pm]

Mr T.M. Murphy: I am sorry, member for Mandurah, if that was unclear. However, the member cited some specific instances of efficiency dividend budget adjustments that have been canvassed by me with my staff. I do not recall issuing that information to the opposition. I am assuming a member of my staff has done so. In that context, and given the task ahead of us, I would hope that the opposition plays a constructive role in this process. The minister has indicated that it is not an easy task; however, it is a possible task. In the context of a 57 per cent increase in our budget over the last four years, finding a two per cent reduction of \$7.6 million this year is doable. I will not do that in a vacuum. Regarding the specifics mentioned by the member, \$1 million across what, let me advise the member, is 65 separate branches in the department amounts to a fairly thin amount of reduction in each budget. As I said in the presentation, to which the member was obviously a party, that means we will tighten our belt a bit. The other matter that the member indicated was financial assistance. Most of our financial assistance is dedicated to helping particular case matters with issues such as homelessness and domestic violence, and particularly escaping domestic violence. It is beholden on us, with that resource, to look at how we spend it and to apply it in the most effective way to the area for which there is the most need, and that is the examination, consideration and possible adjustment that we will be going through.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I seek some clarification. I am not sure I understood that. Is the director general saying that he will specifically be targeting domestic violence and homelessness with the department's financial assistance? Is that what I hear the director general saying?

Mr T.M. Murphy: We will be examining that and we will see whether there are possibilities for better targeting, whether we can actually make better use of those funds and perhaps make budget adjustments accordingly. Once again, as the minister indicated, these decisions will not be made until the end of June; however, I will not leave it until the last day of June to consider these options.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It seems to me that the director general is consulting with his staff and that is an entirely reasonable thing to do. It is also probably reasonable to expect that that would be done in confidence, given that decisions have not been made to this point, but it is reasonable for the director general to seek some input from departmental staff responsible for delivering some of these services. That is a general comment, and that is a reasonable thing for him to do.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There has been no indication from the opposition that that is an unreasonable thing for someone to do, but I go back to the original question that was asked of the minister at the beginning of this committee; that was, were there areas already identified with regard to the two per cent efficiency dividend? Clearly there are; they have been identified and the director general has explained that. I remind the minister and the director general that it is the role of the opposition to go through the budget and ensure that we are very clear about what services may or may not be under threat of cuts in this particular portfolio area, one of the most important, if not the most important, portfolio area of government. That is the reason for the question and I do not resile at all from asking that question in the manner it was asked.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I refer to the first three points of the service summary on page 700 of the *Budget Statements*. The first three items of service summary, numbers one, two and three, are then translated into outcomes on page 702. If we turn to page 702 and follow those three services through to Page 703, in the middle of the table on that page we end up with a line item referring to full-time equivalent employees. I am just taking people through my little journey to get to page 703! I am particularly interested in the service and key efficiency indicators and the FTE numbers in that table. I suspect that the minister might want to answer this question with supplementary information and if he does, I have the question drafted in writing for the minister. I will run through what I want to ask, although it is a big question. In relation to staffing structures and salaries, firstly, I have a number of questions in respect to specified callings for level 1 positions. How many of these are currently employed? For how many of these is the department funded? What are the salary and on-costs for this level position in a metropolitan area? And then I have a list of places about which I seek information. So my question is really drilling down firstly, into the level 1 positions, the level 2 positions and the level 3 positions. I have all these questions drafted. Would the minister like me to give him a copy of these questions so he can have a look at them?

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: Did the member say she would like information about the number of level 1 positions initially?

Ms L.L. BAKER: I seek information about how many level 1, level 2 and level 3 positions the minister is currently employing. I have a list of these questions drafted and ready for the minister, because I think they are too long for the minister —

Mr J.H.D. DAY: That sounds like a good subject for a question on notice, really, but if the member would like to bring the written question over, we can have a quick look and get some general comments.

The CHAIRMAN: That document cannot be tabled, but the member as her prerogative can pass the minister a private note.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I appreciate the member providing me with information, but clearly it is not possible to provide that amount of detail in an answer in this place. I do not know whether it can be provided as supplementary information in the next week; is that manageable?

The CHAIRMAN: I am obviously happy to allocate a supplementary information number, but I need to clarify the context of the question.

Ms L.L. BAKER: We might need to read it into *Hansard*.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The question will either need to be read in or put as a question on notice, and the member would get an answer that way.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Should I read the question in; it will take a few minutes?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is up to the member.

The CHAIRMAN: I need it read in.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Can I read a question in as per the written question provided to the minister on staffing structure and salaries to specific callings level 1, level 2 and level 3 positions? I just provided those questions to the minister in writing. That might be quickest.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not know. I will use my discretion and allow that to happen, if the minister is happy to provide the answers to the question with supplementary information.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is it usual practice to incorporate something into *Hansard* that is written, but not said?

The CHAIRMAN: If the minister and the member for Maylands are happy that the documents they have are both the same, and if the minister is happy to answer those questions with supplementary information, I am happy to allocate a supplementary information number. I allocate the number to the questions provided in writing to the minister by the member for Maylands, but I will probably take advice before I do that again!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We will do it for the member for Maylands, but we will not make a habit of it! There is a lot of detail requested in this set of questions and it is taken in good faith that the department can provide the answers within the next week or as supplementary information. If that is not possible, the question would be best put on notice. I am sure the minister and the department will use their best efforts.

[*Supplementary Information No B47.*]

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I refer to the first heading, “Supporting Children and Young People in the CEO’s Care” under “Services and Key Efficiency Indicators” on page 703 of budget paper No 2. What system did the Joondalup district office have in place to use a local taxidriver to transport children to contact visits? What are the circumstances around how that situation came about? What are the ages of the children? What were the distances those children travelled?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The minister has made it clear that no young children are transported in taxis and that the only taxidrivers used had a working with children card—at least I know the director general has made that clear—and appropriate safeguards are in place. I ask Mr Murphy to provide some additional information.

[2.30 pm]

Mr T.M. Murphy: I am sorry to disappoint the member here. This issue has been based on very incomplete information that I provided to staff, assuming that my staff could fill in the gaps, knowing how careful we are and the systems we have in place for transport and contact with children. There is no system for using taxis. The issue of circumstances, ages and distance, therefore, is not applicable. We, like all organisations, will use taxis for a range of reasons on occasion. Let me say emphatically, though, that the minister’s statement that taxis are not used for contact visits, which he made both publicly and in response to parliamentary questions, is the case.

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When I spoke to staff—this has subsequently been shared with members and viewers of the ABC—I was trying to indicate that we have to look at creative ways of using the resources that are in our communities to support similar functions. We have developed employment relationships with taxidriver over the years. In Joondalup there was a single contractual relationship with a single taxidriver for 10 weeks to transport one young person to and from a program called the Family Pathways program. It was from the foster carer’s house and return. That is a reasonably rare occurrence, but it was a very good use of the relationship that existed. Appropriate safeguards were in place. With any arrangement that we have with children, we make sure that those safeguards are in place and there is no threat to their safety. Let me say again that we do not have a system and will not develop a system of using taxis for contact visits.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: What is the normal process for someone in that situation to be transported? What sorts of costs are involved in it? Why was this seen as a cost-effective method in this particular situation, and why is transporting in a taxi a much more cost-efficient way?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will give my assessment of it as an observer more than anything else. I know that Mr Murphy just explained that the young person was being transported from a foster carer’s home to a place where this program was being delivered. I think it is pretty straightforward to work out that if a department or a departmental worker had to be sent to the foster carer’s home to then drive the young person to wherever they were going and back again, that would be a much more intensive use of the resources that are available to the department. I do not think it is unreasonable that a taxi was used when appropriate safeguards were in place. That is my observation. I will ask Mr Murphy to confirm whether that sounds right.

Mr T.M. Murphy: It certainly is the case. Once again, I emphasise that this was somebody who was employed to do this task. Across the department something like 89 full-time equivalent staff are employed as transport and contact officers. That is a very large number of staff.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Sorry, 89 staff that are employed?

Mr T.M. Murphy: They are for transport and contact of children who are in care. That costs something like \$4 million a year. It is a good system. Staff are certainly part of the teams that operate in districts. As recently as this week, they had a two-day learning and training forum, so they are well supported and well integrated into our operations. But it seems to me, as the person responsible for this budget and FTEs, that we have to continually look at whether there any additional cost-effective ways, which are safe and good for the children and the families with whom they reside, of doing this very large amount of work. There may be; there may not be. But I am certainly going to explore it to fulfil my responsibilities.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I am a bit confused, because in the previous answer we were told there is no system in place, yet there is a contractual arrangement with a particular taxidriver who has a working with children certificate. If no system is in place, how can a contract be put in place so the same taxidriver shows up all the time? I want to know when this practice started, if it is still in place and how often it happens.

Mr T.M. Murphy: I mentioned that we have some 89 FTE transport and contact officers on the staff. Every month I would sign half a dozen or so onto casual contracts. These are part-time positions. Most of them are permanent part-time. However, there is a continual influx of people being employed on a casual basis for this role. It does not matter whether they are a taxidriver, a housewife, a plumber, a social work student or a psychology student; they are employed on a casual basis for this purpose. The system is not with taxidrivers. The system is with the employment of transport and contact officers whom we call family resource employees. That has operated for many years, and will continue to do so.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I am talking particularly about the taxidriver. Mr Murphy said he has a contract with the taxidriver. How has that contract come about, and how long has that practice been in place? Is it still in place? What are the ages? He said earlier it was only one child. What is the age of that child or, if there is more than one child, the number of children?

Mr T.M. Murphy: I have tried to indicate that in that particular instance that I raised as an example with my staff, we used an existing system and put that person and that arrangement into that existing system—that is, using family resource employees.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: And the age?

Mr T.M. Murphy: That was a 10-year-old child. I emphasise that this is with a contracted employee of the department.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: So that child is not getting into a taxi and being transported; a person employed as a casual at Joondalup district office for DCP shows up, picks up the child and takes them to the place that they are going?

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Mr T.M. Murphy: As a casual employee of the department.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Are they getting in a taxi or are they getting into a vehicle that is contracted?

Mr T.M. Murphy: In this instance, that person used a taxi vehicle in the same way that our family resource employees use their own vehicles.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: In looking at the footage of the director general, which he himself said was on the ABC, it is used as an example of being able to meet, as I understand, the two per cent efficiency dividend. How is it cheaper? If it was done under the same system of 89 staff, how does this demonstrate meeting the efficiency dividend? How was it cheaper and more efficient to use the taxi, if this is just a system that was previously used? Are they paid the same rate and conditions as these 89 workers? Is it somehow seen as a cheaper form of fulfilling this role that has been undertaken?

[2.40 pm]

Mr T.M. Murphy: The efficiency comes from casual employment that is time limited and for a specific purpose in this instance. As I said, I did not elaborate on that particular example with my staff, because I also used it to introduce the notion that this is an area—transport and contact—in which we will establish a dedicated working party and look at whether there are more creative options.

Frankly, I do not know whether we can find more creative and more cost-effective options in this area, but it is beholden on us to look for them and see what partnerships might be appropriate in the community. For example, we are particularly interested in the commonwealth-funded Family Relationship Centres and whether those services can provide a fee-for-service contact service for us. We have to examine this and work it through. Our business, like any other, notwithstanding its sensitivity, importance and criticality, which obviously we appreciate, has to continue to look at whether there are more effective and cost-effective ways of doing what we do. If I may beg members’ indulgence, I very much regret putting only half the story out there and putting out a teaser to get people thinking, because it has been picked up and distorted in the way that it has. It is very unfortunate and has not really helped our own efforts. However, we will plough on and look at whether we can find different and better ways of doing the same task.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Can the minister tell us what the process is for a casual employee to pick up a child from a foster home, take them in a vehicle, whether it is a taxi or otherwise, to a destination and drop them off? I know that with my child, who is 10 years of age, I ensure that they are in the car and they are safe in the car; I take them where I am taking them; and I get out of the car and I make sure they are safe from the car to the premises. Then I come back and pick them up again. What is the process that the department uses?

When I think of the notion of a taxi, I see someone darting from a house, jumping in a cab and being driven somewhere. I do not see the taxidriver getting out and escorting that person to the facility and back again. Can I get that process clear, please? Also, when was the Minister for Child Protection made aware of the way this operation works with casuals, taxidrivers or otherwise? When was the minister made aware that that is how it works now?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I understand the member is asking for a description of the usual process for transporting children, so I will ask Mr Murphy. The member also asked when the minister was made aware of this particular case; it has been featured in the media in the last 24 hours or so. The member would like a description of the usual process for transporting children. Presumably, that needs to take into account both very young children and older children. There may well be different approaches to some extent. I will ask Mr Murphy to take the member through that.

Mr T.M. Murphy: As the member indicated, talking about taxis conjures up a particular vision. That is why I begged members’ indulgence to say it is an unfortunate interpretation, because a standard taxi ride is certainly not the usual process we use to transport our children. People who provide transport to children are part of a care team in a district. We make an effort to introduce them to the child and the family. We make an effort for there to be a consistent transport officer for children and families. That is not always possible, but we try for that to be the case. We certainly expect people providing transport for our children to be sensitive to those children’s needs. We often ask those people to stay with the child in a given situation. Certainly, when someone picks up a child from a foster family and transports them to a particular program, our expectation is that they pick up the child from the door; spend time being familiar with the family; transport the child; have a relationship with the child that is friendly, respectful and safe; accompany the child into the program; similarly, when going the other way, wait for them in the waiting room; walk them out to the vehicle; and walk them back to the family. They are our expectations.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Given that this is the usual process and given what Mr Murphy has said before, which is that in this case the person was a contracted worker, it is not usually a social worker who transports a child.

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Mr Murphy is saying that it is usual for contract and casual workers, including someone who drives a taxi and in this case used a taxi, to transport children. It is not rare and it is not only in a stranded situation that this happens; this is the normal process.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: What is the member asking?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am confirming what I understand. The minister last night in the news reports said that the transport of children in taxis is a rare thing and used only in stranded situations. From what the director is telling us today, this is not a rare situation or a situation of being stranded. This is a normal situation in which 89 staff who have been trained, but may or may not have a relationship with the family, come and transport children. They do not have social work degrees; they have basic training. This is not a rare situation of a casual worker, in this case a taxidriver, picking up a child for these sorts of visits.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I understand that the system in place now has been in place for years. Mr Murphy indicates it has been in place for decades. There is nothing unusual about it at all. I know that Mr Murphy said he expects that those who transport children to establish some relationship with the family. They may not necessarily know the family previously, I assume, but they need to make some contact and become familiar with the child and ensure the child is comfortable in that person’s presence and when being driven.

The CHAIRMAN: I have a follow-up question. Of the 89 FTEs that do this role, how many are taxidrivers?

Mr T.M. Murphy: That is a very, very good question which removes the conflation of two ideas inherent in a previous question. To my knowledge, one, who is no longer with us.

The CHAIRMAN: I apologise to the member for Maylands and committee members about supplementary information B47. As I have been advised that documents cannot be incorporated in *Hansard*, I will ask the member to read that question.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Do not panic, because I have worked out how to do it quickly. The question that the minister has agreed to give me supplementary information on is as follows: I refer to specified calling level 1, level 2 and level 3 positions; How many are currently employed? How many of these positions is the department funded for? What is the salary and oncosts for each of those three positions in the following areas: the metropolitan area, Pilbara, Murchison, West Kimberley, East Kimberley, goldfields, south west, wheatbelt, Peel and the great southern? For a specified calling caseworker at a remote or isolated location such as Balga or Jigalong, what is the salary and oncosts?

[See page .]

Mr P.T. MILES: I would like to refer the minister to the second dot point on page 701, which refers to domestic violence incidents. Can the minister explain the department’s role in reducing family and domestic violence and the support services provided to help those affected by family and domestic violence?

[2.50 pm]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Domestic violence is a very serious issue. This department is the lead agency in bringing about improvements to try to reduce the incidents of domestic violence in Western Australia and the department is involved in a number of strategies to try to achieve that. I will ask Kay Benham to provide more information about how this issue is responded to.

Ms K. Benham: The Department for Child Protection is the lead agency for family and domestic violence issues. A range of improvements have been brought about to address the prevalence of family and domestic violence across WA. The department is involved in the following key activities, including supporting the first three-year national action plan of the partnership on the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 and the development of the “WA Strategic Plan for Family and Domestic Violence 2009–2013”. The main focus of the state plan is the integration of responses of agencies and attitudinal change, which includes the introduction of a model for interagency management of high-risk cases as well as a family and domestic violence common–risk assessment framework so that community and government agencies across the board can use a similar framework when identifying, screening and assessing family and domestic violence. The department is also responsible for chairing an across-government working group to develop recommendations for a family domestic violence fatality review model. This model has been developed and the Ombudsman has responsibility for implementing the fatality review process, which will commence on 1 July 2012. There is also the implementation of a statewide family and domestic violence co-location model. This involves departmental workers and Western Australia Police co-locating at police stations across the state. The department also provides over \$27 million for a range of family and domestic violence crisis accommodation and support services, counselling services and coordination services and the new Safe at Home and domestic violence outreach programs. We also provide funding to the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family

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Violence Services WA to support their working, strengthening and integrated domestic violence homelessness system and workforce development. In addition, the department operates 24-hour telephone information referral and support helplines for men and women experiencing family and domestic violence.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Is there a list of where the domestic violence workers and police are co-located, and is that available?

Ms K. Benham: Yes.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Is that on the website?

Ms K. Benham: Yes, it is. There are 17 locations across the state.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: And is that on the website?

Ms K. Benham: Across the state in the metropolitan areas and each of the regions, including the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields, Murchison, Peel —

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Recently people have died as a result of domestic violence and the perpetrators have received very inadequate penalties for it. I am thinking of Saori Jones and the inequity of the sentence. She had children who witnessed that domestic violence. How is the Department for Child Protection working with the Attorney General’s department and other agencies so that children will not be exposed to those incidents so that people can see that justice is being done?

Ms K. Benham: Obviously the penalties regarding family domestic violence offences are matters for the Attorney General’s department. Certainly the Department for Child Protection, through its Family and Domestic Violence Unit, would be happy to provide information on that, but it has not gone any further.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I refer again to the growth in demand for child protection services under “Major Spending Changes” on page 699. The extra \$15 million in growth funding is fantastic and very welcome. However, the counterbalance is the \$7.6 million cut followed by another \$2.5 million cut to the Office of Shared Services. When I do the sums, it seems that the government is already carrying a deficit because of that. The additional \$15 million is counterbalanced by the \$7.6 million and \$2.5 million cuts to shared services. Can the minister comment on how the growth funding is balanced against those cuts, because it seems like a no-win situation.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The Office of Shared Services has an unfortunate history associated with it, in my view. The government decided to decommission the Office of Shared Services and that decision needs to be incorporated into the decisions of all departments that were previously part of the Office of Shared Services. I will ask Mr Murphy to provide more commentary on how that is being managed and perhaps an additional comment on how growth is being dealt with.

Mr T.M. Murphy: If we look only at those bald figures, it tells just part of the story. Nevertheless, it leaves roughly \$5 million additional funding this year. Together with the other growth funding, that will cover the major areas of expenditure that we have to deal with in the coming year.

Ms L.L. BAKER: What is the other growth funding? I missed that.

Mr T.M. Murphy: If I can juggle the member’s numbers, she is talking about \$15 million in growth minus \$10 million in cuts, which equals \$5 million. That is clear and unencumbered. However, we also will spend the other \$10 million on growth and initiatives to reduce demand on child protection services. Separate to that we have to find efficiencies that amount to \$7.6 million. As the minister indicated, those decisions will not be made until 30 June. However, we are canvassing a range of options to make it work. Let me be clear about the growth funding: we will allocate that to provide for additional subsidies for foster carers and additional children in care. We also will provide additional case support costs for those children in care. Each child in care is allocated an average of \$4 800 for additional costs for their care, and that is applied individually to their specific needs. We will undertake, for example, an initiative to reduce demand on our workers and increase capacity using that demand funding. We will launch a major media campaign for the recruitment of foster carers, which we last did three and a half years ago. That resulted in recruiting over 500 new general foster carer households, which was a great success. We believe that, three and a half years later, now is the right time to revisit that campaign because of the level of interest it created at that time and because of the amount of time it takes people to think of and make a decision to become a foster carer. So we will be meeting both the number of essential costs and taking some initiatives to boost capacity to manage our demand.

[3.00 pm]

[Mr A.P. O’Gorman took the chair.]

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Ms L.L. BAKER: I have a further question. That is a good point and I remember that campaign well. Is there any adjustment upwards? I am hoping to hear about the allowance that has been paid to foster carers in the new campaign, as that was three years ago, and I am assuming that, outside of CPI, we have tried to do something to encourage more.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Murphy.

Mr T.M. Murphy: The increase in the foster carer subsidy is 3.5 per cent this year.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Is that CPI?

Mr T.M. Murphy: A big CPI.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Further to the question, did the director general say the number when he was talking before? Can the minister tell me how many foster carers are currently registered and how many currently have children placed with them?

Mr T.M. Murphy: I can if the member can be just a little patient as we riffle through the numbers.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am more than a little patient, Mr Murphy!

Ms L.L. BAKER: We are here all night!

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes, I am here until 10 o'clock tonight!

The CHAIRMAN: Ms Benham.

Ms K. Benham: The number of approved general households overall is 1 147, and approved relative carer households is 1 239.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I have a further question. How many of those currently have children placed with them?

Ms K. Benham: There are 690 approved general carer households with children placed. The number of approved relative carer households with children placed is 856.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I have a further question through the minister. I am wondering whether the director general told us the annual growth in the number of registered general foster carers, not relative carers. Did he give that data on the general growth when he was talking about it?

Ms K. Benham: We can give the member the numbers.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Can the minister give us the annual growth in the number of registered general foster carers?

Ms K. Benham: No. We would have to take on notice that question on the rate of growth.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Can that be taken on notice—is that how we do it—and given as supplementary information?

The CHAIRMAN: Can the minister detail the exact supplementary information he will give?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: What is the annual growth in the number of registered general foster carers, not relative carers?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We will provide information about the —

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The annual growth in the number.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We need to know what the quantum was in 2010–11 and then the number in 2011–12 to determine the growth rate from those two figures, and this is for foster carers who are not relatives.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B48.]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the service summary on page 700. I am looking at the three expense items there and the comparisons with the 2011–12 budget.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Is it the budget or estimated actuals?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am sorry, estimated actuals as related to the final spend. There was an overspend on all of those three items. This question relates to the earlier question from the member for Maylands. The director general highlighted in his presentation to staff that the number of children coming into care is expected to rise by 7.5 per cent. It has been between four and six per cent over the last couple of years. Given the cuts mentioned, the pressures the department faces in these three areas and the increase in the number of children coming into care, can the director general or the department comment on how they expect to be able to handle these spending

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pressures, because the trend shows an overspend? How does the director general see the department coping with the expected increase in spending pressure?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am advised that the increase in the estimated actual outcome for 2011–12 compared with the budgeted amount, as presented in the budget last year, is not as a result of increased demand; it is as a result of a range of other issues. For example, there is an \$8.61 million increase in the funding provided for eligible not-for-profit, non-government services; \$6.472 million in natural disaster relief funding; \$3.851 million in additional funding for information technology support, and infrastructure and assistance support that has been funded from the reprioritisation of secure-care capital; \$2.5 million in additional funding for emergency management services in 2011–12; a \$3.393 million increase in the district allowance, of which \$2.768 million is funded from the royalties for regions program; \$625 000 from the consolidated account; \$2.5 million additional funding for emergency management services in 2011–12; \$1.173 million for the further expansion of the responsible parenting program to the wheatbelt and south west regions; and a \$1.08 million increase in indexation for the state component of homeless services. That is therefore why there is an apparent fairly large increase in the estimated actual expenditure, as opposed to the budgeted expenditure for 2011–12.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have a further question. Some of those items the minister mentioned obviously will be carried through, I am assuming, and that is why there is an increase in this year’s budget to compensate for some of those items that will need to continue. Some are one-offs, it sounds like, including flood assistance et cetera. The minister’s initial answer was that most of that difference between estimated and actual was not from pressures such as the increase in the percentage of children coming into care. Perhaps I could have a comment from the director general on the issue of the increased percentage of children coming into care. The dot point at the bottom of page 700 of the budget papers states that over the last three years the increase has been four to six per cent, but the director general indicated in his presentation to staff that he was expecting a seven to 7.5 per cent increase. I would like an explanation of that significant increase in the figure over the last three years.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am sorry, I am not clear on what the member is asking.

[3.10 pm]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I would like a comment on the percentage of children coming into care, particularly as we are expecting a rate of 7.5 per cent. Is that correct? Because in the figures here, the rate has gone from four per cent to six per cent over the past three years, but in the director general’s presentation to staff I understand that he said it would be 7.5 per cent. Is the 7.5 per cent figure the one he is using and expects for the coming year? If so, how does he expect the budget to be able to address that increase, which is above what we have seen on average over the past three years?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Mr Murphy will answer.

Mr T.M. Murphy: To a large extent, I think that question has been answered insofar as I indicated the core costs that we have allocated for that purpose—foster-carer subsidies and case support costs for the individual children. Also, I have indicated that we are launching a new media campaign to recruit foster carers based on the success we had three and a half years ago. They are the essential elements that have to be in place to manage an increase in the number of children in care. As I said before, we are very proud to have managed to keep the growth of children in care down to between four and six per cent over the past three years, as indicated in the budget papers. We calculate the estimated increase on that linear progression. The fact that there has been an increase from four to six per cent gives us an anticipated progression of seven and a half per cent. From current trends, it looks like that estimated increase will be realised this year. But I am very confident, as I said, that we have the core elements of service in place that can manage that and the core funding to do so. That said, it really keeps the pressure on the department to look at how we can work even better with our “signs of safety” approach and help families to build safety using the resources around them in their extended family, in their community and in the professional services they work with, so that children can remain safely at home. It is not an end in itself; and it is not in response to numbers per se; it is the best approach where it can be done safely. For us, the seven and a half per cent is an indicator to ask: how can we do better on that front of keeping kids safely at home with their families?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Has the department had any indication of any trends in the number of children coming into care from fly in, fly out families?

Mr T.M. Murphy: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on trends. I might preface it with another couple of numbers because it will give the context to the previous question. As I said, over the past few years the rate has been between four and six per cent. If we go back to only 2006–07 we had increases of 20 per cent and 14 per cent in those years respectively. We are containing the numbers. Specifically, trends with children from fly in, fly out families are not coming through at this stage. Certainly, anecdotally though, we are hearing of more

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pressures in those families, but that reflects general inquiries rather than child protection concerns and any increase in children coming into care.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Did I hear the director general right? At the moment the rate of child in-care growth is running at four to six per cent, which is what the budget is based on. The director general predicts that maybe next year, based on what we heard on the DVD, the growth will run at seven to 7.5 per cent next year and in 2006–07 it ran at an increase of 14 per cent?

Mr T.M. Murphy: In 2006 it was around 20 per cent and in 2007, 13.5 per cent.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: What caused the change? Was it due to further funding to get more caseworkers? How does such a massive change occur from that large growth? Is it because the department got an influx of very much-needed, very urgent and very serious funding for staff to see some really good responses? That is a massive change. I am interested to know. My colleague the member for Maylands is nodding furiously at me—at around that time she was the executive director of WACOSS—that it was because the department had a massive increase in staff and in funding. If we are looking at quite a substantial cut in funding this year, are we not looking at increases much more above the 7.5 per cent based on trends?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It seems to me that there was a significant amount of unmet need going back a few years. Once that was identified and there was a significant increase in the funding available to employ more staff, a lot of that unmet need was dealt with and, therefore, the growth rate since then has dropped off somewhat, albeit there has been significant —

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The need has been addressed.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It has to some extent. We would like to think there will be a reduction in need at some time. I guess that is wishful thinking. I will ask Mr Murphy to provide a bit more comment.

Mr T.M. Murphy: Essentially, that sums it up. In 2006–07 there was an enormous amount of pent-up demand. People will remember the review into the former Department of Community Development by Prudence Ford and the reforms that followed that. It is now five years after that process. The department has been transformed and been well resourced. It has got on top of its demand pressures. However, in the context in which the minister commented, society continues to grow, various pressures continue to grow and new cases are coming in all the time, but we are managing the demand that is coming into the department and the projected growth in the number of children in care, which is where this question began. We believe we will manage that demand next year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is important to remember, as I said at the outset this afternoon, that alcohol and drug abuse are a major cause of this problem.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: This question may be related to the last question about a massive increase in funding. The department has tripled funding for community sector organisations for intensive family support services in the past four years. Can the minister provide more detail on the intensive family support services and explain how these services limit the growth in the number of children coming into care, as indicated in the last dot point on page 700?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Intensive family support services play a very important role in this department’s objective to protect children from harm and abuse. These services are underpinned by the principle that a child’s best interests are most likely to be met within their own family, with children being placed in an out-of-home situation as a last resort. The intensive family support services provided by the community sector aim to either prevent children from coming into care or to reunify children and young people in care with their own family wherever that can be achieved. That is an overview; I will ask Mr Murphy to provide additional information on that program.

[3.20 pm]

Mr T.M. Murphy: I am very pleased that over recent years we have managed to increase funding as substantially as we have for these services. Their capacity has increased from some 250 families to 580 families since 2007–08, which is a massive increase. It way exceeds the proportional increase in the number of children coming into care. I made the point earlier that we have limited the number of children coming into care by virtue of the way we work in Child Protection through the signs of safety framework and that a 91 per cent increase in safety and wellbeing assessments in 2010–11 saw the growth in children in care limited to some six per cent. An essential adjunct of that was more of those families receiving intensive family support services. In the same period, the number of families receiving intensive family support services increased by 53 per cent—a very substantial increase. Similarly, less intensive family support cases managed by the department or by referral to community sector agencies increased by 184 per cent. This really illustrates that even when a lot of families

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experiencing severe difficulties are coming to the department, they are being managed intensively, in the most appropriate way and in ways that allow them to keep their children at home with them without compromise to family safety.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I was drawn away, but this is something I am very interested in. I refer to the tripling in funding to community sector organisations, and I understand how important it is to prevent children going into care. The director general previously talked about trends. Has that tripling in funding seen a tripling in how much is outsourced to those community sector organisations? The director general talked about services being delivered in the agency and by outside community sector organisations. I am interested to know whether the majority of that tripling of funding is going to community sector organisations.

Mr T.M. Murphy: Intensive family support services are entirely within the community sector, so the tripling of funding is entirely within the community sector.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Have those services always been delivered entirely within the community sector? Have workers employed directly in the Department for Child Protection ever delivered that service?

Mr T.M. Murphy: The dedicated intensive family support services that we are talking about were established in and have always been in the community sector.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I refer to page 699, "Capital Appropriation". I draw the minister's attention to the 2011-12 year in which \$11 810 000 was spent; however, the estimates show that all that really got spent was \$9 243 000. What happened to the spare \$2.6 million that was obviously around as a result of that? Were any works deferred?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will ask Mr Murphy to answer this question. I want to clarify that the member wants to know why there was a reduction in expenditure of \$2.6 million and what happened to it.

Mr T.M. Murphy: The largest item in our capital program has been the expansion of residential care units for children in care; that is, the buying and building of houses for children. The rollout of that in the north of the state has been predictably slower than we originally thought it would be. The \$2.6 million is funds that have yet to be allocated for the purchase or building of houses in the north west of the state for young children who are in care.

Ms L.L. BAKER: The director general has almost answered the question I was about to ask on the capital needs for the next out years. What are the anticipated capital needs?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I think the member is asking what facilities the department expects will need to be constructed over the next few years. All departments have a wish list. Not all desires across government can be met, so decisions need to be made. I will ask Mr Murphy to provide general information about the sorts of areas that are likely to be considered, without making any commitment to the future. These decisions are made on an annual basis, and just because nothing is in this year's budget for a particular project does not mean to say it will not be in next year's budget.

Ms L.L. BAKER: There are obviously some things that the director general just mentioned that relate to the \$2.6 million.

Mr T.M. Murphy: I refer the member to the asset investment program on page 705, which indicates that the estimated expenditure this year will be \$3 million. This occurs after a major capital expenditure for the expansion of residential care, which is nearing its end. As I indicated, a number of places in that program are yet to be completed—Kalgoorlie hostel, Kununurra hostel, Newman group home, Port Hedland hostel and Wyndham group home; all of which are in some stage of development. We have priorities for our office space. Frankly, we prioritise those throughout the year. The next major office expansion and development that should occur next year is in Midland.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I refer to "Supporting Individuals/Families at Risk or In Crisis" on page 704. In response to a parliamentary question, Minister Day advised that in the year from 1 July 2010 to 31 May 2011 there were 671 instances of financial assistance to 488 clients for crisis housing, and that housing financial assistance went to such things as motels, caravan parks and various other things. Is the minister able to give me the same figures for the period 1 July 2011 to 31 May 2012, or an approximate figure around that period? How many hotel vouchers were given out because of the present housing crisis? All members of Parliament know about people turning up in our offices on a regular basis, who basically have no homes and are living in cars, and we have to send them off to crisis care. The Department for Child Protection is involved when children are involved. Those people get some sort of short-term accommodation. My first question is: how many instances are there and how many clients does the department have at this time? I have a follow-up question after that.

[3.30 pm]

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: Does the member want to know how many?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: How many instances are there of financial assistance to how many clients in relation to the housing crisis—that is, paying for hotels, caravans in caravan parks and such things?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The member wants to know on how many occasions assistance has been provided —

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: And for how many clients.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: — for short-term accommodation in hotels and caravans in caravan parks.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes, crisis care through Child Protection.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Mr Chairman, we are happy to provide that by way of supplementary information. I will make the observation, as I have just been advised, that the people who are assisted through this service are not just those who are suffering from homelessness. A significant component of people is being assisted as a result of incidents of domestic violence.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Okay.

The CHAIRMAN: I want the supplementary information clarified.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Can I see whether the department is happy to add something to that supplementary information? How much does it actually cost? I want the instances, the number of clients and how much that costs the department.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I think it is pretty clear what the department is providing.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We will provide that information, as far as it is reasonably accessible over the next week.

[Supplementary Information No B49.]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will ask Mr Murphy to answer that.

Mr T.M. Murphy: There may need to be some generalising with the cost. The total cost for that program is \$1.24 million. The information sought may require us to go back through a lot of individual payments, so we may have to generalise that.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am not expecting the department to go back through individual payments; it has other more important business. The director general said that the program costs \$1.24 million. I gather that is the estimated cost for this budget year, 2012?

Mr T.M. Murphy: Yes.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Is that an increase on the previous year's budget?

Mr T.M. Murphy: No. This has been a static amount for quite a while. The internal usage of it, as I referred to in answer to an earlier question about how we use financial assistance, has changed over time.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Although I do not want the department to go through each payment, can I get the percentage for housing crisis—including domestic violence and homelessness—that came out of that \$1.24 million in the 2011–12 financial year and the percentage that came out of that financial assistance money for the 2010–11 financial year, so that I can see the trends?

Mr T.M. Murphy: We are going through that exercise at the moment. It is not as simple as we would wish. However, we will make our best endeavours to provide the information we come up with.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: That would be great. Thank you.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the eighth dot point on page 701 related to the transition out of care to independence. This is an important area. I acknowledge some good initiatives have been developed, including the department paying TAFE fees and driver's licence fees for young people moving out of care. I think they are very positive initiatives. Has there been any additional funding provided in this area? Will growth funding be allocated to support non-government organisations that assist care leavers; and, if so, how much?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will ask Mr Murphy to comment.

Mr T.M. Murphy: Funding for this area comes from a variety of levels, but we do fund three community sector services to provide specific leaving care services—that is, development of life skills, support and assisting with accommodation. Those services have just received a 15 per cent across-the-board increase in funding as a result of the government's allocation to the community sector per se. That provides a major boost to those services' viability and their capacity to pay and attract staff. Over the past two years we have established a pool of funds to be applied to individual needs—that is, a leaving care fund, which we manage internally. That stands at \$1.25 million. That particularly helps young people leaving care, or approaching leaving care, to get their

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driver's licence. It also helps with some expensive medical services that are not otherwise covered by Medicare, such as dental needs, in circumstances in which there might otherwise be too long a waiting list. That has been quite a boost, particularly for young people getting drivers' licences. That has probably been one of the most popular things we have done with young people of driving age. That fund has not been fully drawn on over the past year as we get our changes and improvements in practice for leaving care in place. We would expect that leaving care fund to be adequate for that purpose again in the coming year.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: When I was a minister, I always remember going to the annual event—I forget the name now—when a lot of young people in care graduate —

Mr J.H.D. DAY: If I can interrupt for a minute. The member is not speaking with his usual clarity and vigour!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: My usual clarity and vigour—yes. I recall when I was a minister attending a presentation to young people who had been in the care of the CEO. Can the director general remind me of the name? It is named after a wonderful woman.

Mr T.M. Murphy: These are the awards formerly known as the Ida Curtois Awards, now the Perth Airport Achiever Awards—one of which is the Ida Curtois Inspiration Award.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Of course. One of the things of concern to me is that this is an area that should show some growth funding. Unless there is more growth funding put into this area, some of the good work could be in jeopardy, such as the two examples just given. I am interested to know whether there are any other areas that young people tell the department would be of benefit to them as they transition into independent living. Funding drivers' licences is excellent, as is the further education assistance. I understand TAFE fees are paid. For example, do we pay for any young persons who aspire to attend university? Has assistance with higher education contribution scheme fees been requested by a young person? I am interested in what other opportunities the department is looking at offering? It already has two excellent ones—are there any others?

[3.40 pm]

Mr T.M. Murphy: As I said, this is an area in which we have put a lot of focus over the past couple of years. Any young person who goes to university will be a recipient of a scholarship. That does not cover all their fees but it is a significant boost. It is strong recognition. The feedback we get from young people for that recognition is fantastic. At this year's awards ceremony one of the young people who spoke was one of last year's recipients for a university award and he said it was really a major boost to his life and an example for his siblings. Although it would be nice to pay the HECS fees, it is probably not a priority, but giving a boost to those young people who go to university is covered. Also in the last year an additional program for life skills development at a range of levels, from week-long courses through to all-day workshops to website information, was established by the CREATE Foundation. It is currently funded by the commonwealth and it is a program we are committed to seeing continue and expand over time. Last year a very important agreement was also reached with the Department of Housing for young people leaving care; although we will pursue a range of options, and young people leaving care are accommodated in a range of options, most ideally continuing with their foster carers, the Department of Housing will ensure that there is a social housing option available to all young children leaving care. Therefore, the only instances in which a young person would be left without accommodation would be when their own social or mental health problems make it very hard for us to deliver that service. Through a range of cooperative efforts across government, with the non-government sector, collaboration with the commonwealth and the department putting additional funds into this area, we have had a major boost to young people's continued wellbeing as they leave care.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Does ongoing support also include support for some young people moving out of care who may have an ongoing counselling and/or medical-type need—the director general mentioned dental services—that continues into their adult life? Does that still all conclude at the age of 25 years?

Mr T.M. Murphy: That is assessed on a case-by-case basis, but certainly if there is an acute need, we will look at how we can support that. For a counselling need, for example—I have certainly talked to young people who have been in care and the trauma that brought them into care lasts a long time and requires a healing experience in adulthood—if a service is the way they will reap that healing in adulthood or over the age of 18, a lot of mainstream services are available and we are good at facilitating a young person's access to those services.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Just a final question on this: there is a mandatory obligation of the department for the yearly assessment of the education and health plans. Has there been any noncompliance with that check for any child in care for any reason; and, if so, why might that check have not occurred?

Mr T.M. Murphy: Documented education plans by public schools, Catholic schools or independent schools have been substantially introduced over the last two years. Specific health plans for young people entering care

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have been introduced over a similar period. It is fair to say that our compliance was not 100 per cent from day one; rather, we began with pilot programs and staged rollouts, and we have built compliance over time. Frankly, we have built compliance with being up to date with care planning and care plan reviews over time, as the reforms of the last five years have become embedded in the department. We are now in a position in which our care planning for children per se is by and large up to date. There will always be individual circumstances that delay a person's situation, but by and large we are up to date and compliant, and that is important. That includes education and health plans. There is some lag, though, in some areas, and usually that has to do with the resources in schools or health services, or people living in remote areas where that level of formal planning may lag somewhat. However, it is increasing all the time. I am confident that we will reach full compliance with that in the near future and I think it has been one of the more substantial boosts to the wellbeing of young people in care that was born out of the recommendations of the Ford report we mentioned earlier and out of that consequent reform.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I ask about children coming into care. Can the director general, through the minister, give us an indication, as an example, about how many children came into care last year at birth?

Mr T.M. Murphy: Once again, we would have to provide the answer to that by way of supplementary information, but the approximate number would be 30 or 40 children. That is also a bit of a success story over recent years in the department because that number has reduced significantly as a result of a process of pre-birth planning using our "Signs of Safety" child protection approach, done collaboratively with King Edward Memorial Hospital, because these clients are by and large at King Edward Memorial Hospital, and with Legal Aid introducing lawyers into that process when it is advantageous. We have had fewer children removed. There are nevertheless instances in which we may make a care and protection order, but still allow a child to go home. That is as a result of quite stringent safety planning for those children and having got in earlier and more collaboratively with the family and the range of services around them.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I give the member for Swan Hills the call, I have a further question on something that Mr Murphy said about social housing and an agreement. Is there an official memorandum of understanding? Can Mr Murphy please flesh it out for us and tell us a bit about it?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Just before we go to the answer to that question, I will just inquire whether there is any support for having a break for 10 minutes or so in a short while.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, is there a support for a break at, say, four o'clock?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, the minister has been in the chair for a while!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The member is very kind!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Could we resume at four o'clock?

The CHAIRMAN: We will have an answer to this question and then we will break and resume at four o'clock, if that is okay. The member for Swan Hills will have the first question.

Mr T.M. Murphy: Yes; we have a formal memorandum of understanding with the Department of Housing. We have formal memoranda of understanding with all other human services departments, setting out a range of issues through which we interact and seek to integrate our services. The agreement with the Department of Housing is simply as I put—but there are some other details, as always!—which is that the departments confer in the lead-up to a young person leaving care. Our department is committed to pursuing all viable options for that young person and their accommodation, and that includes options that the Department of Housing may assist with. But then in the final analysis, and that is what I meant by "this is the bottom line", if we can find no other option for a young person leaving care, the Department of Housing takes responsibility for finding a social housing option for that person.

[3.50 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: So they will always have accommodation.

Mr T.M. Murphy: There will always be an option; that is right. This is a significant advance.

The CHAIRMAN: So that person never becomes homeless, so to speak.

Mr T.M. Murphy: Unfortunately, that is not the same thing. Some of our young people go on to be doctors, lawyers and politicians.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Abject failures, in other words!

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Mr T.M. Murphy: Most lawyers are okay! Many of our young people leave care with unresolved trauma and carry their damage. Also, many of them are intellectually disabled or carry chronic mental health problems. There are challenges in keeping those people engaged with services and with accommodation, as there are with the whole homeless population.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Is that MOU available? Mr Murphy, are you able to take it on notice and table it?

Mr T.M. Murphy: Certainly that could be made available. I was just checking whether we actually published it on our website. We publish a lot of information on our website, such as our case practice manual and so on, but when it involves other agencies we do not have the same discretion. Certainly, from the point of view of the Department for Child Protection, I can see no impediment to making that available.

The CHAIRMAN: Can we just be clear that the minister is providing that MOU as supplementary information?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It will be provided subject to agreement of the Minister for Housing as well.

[*Supplementary Information No B50.*]

Meeting suspended from 3.52 to 4.06 pm

The CHAIRMAN: We are about to recommence division 58, but before I do that, I am cognisant of the time and I remind members of the opposition that there are another three divisions to go through. Do you have some indication of when you would like to change over?

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: We will push through on this until 4.30 pm and then go to Communities.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Service 12, Energy Policy and Programs, has to be completed by 5.30 pm.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We will aim to get to that just after 5.00 pm.

The CHAIRMAN: I have two questions that members are ready to ask and the first one will go to the member for Swan Hills.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: The fifth dot point on page 701 refers to the delegation of case management to community sector organisations. Can the minister provide details of this initiative and when it is anticipated to be initiated?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: The department has agreed to pilot the delegation of case management of 34 children and young people who are in the care of the CEO until 18 years of age, who are also involved in long-term stable placements, and with whom there are no contentious case management issues. It is expected that this will reduce duplication and enable carers to have more autonomy in making day-to-day decisions for children in their care. I will ask Mr Murphy to provide some additional information about this program.

Mr T.M. Murphy: This is a case in which we are in a virtuous cycle; we can be more efficient and more effective. This program is for children and young people—they tend to be older children—in long-term stable placements that are managed by a non-government organisation that already does the bulk of care planning and support for carers. When we do case management, our efforts, unavoidably, duplicate the effort already being put in by the community agencies. By passing over the official case management, we can both save our resources and have fewer complications for the carers and the community sector agency. As the minister indicated, we are beginning with the pilot, but it is large; it will involve 34 children and young people and occur in Armadale, Midland, Mirrabooka and Perth. The four community sector agencies participating in the pilot are Wanslea Family Services; Parkerville Children and Youth Care; Yorganop Association Incorporated, an Aboriginal agency; and MercyCare. We are very close to commencing the program. This is about a delegation of legislative responsibilities of the CEO under the act, so we have signed an instrument of delegation and a variation of contract with each of the agencies. We anticipate that it will start very early in the new financial year. It is probably also worth noting that we have been negotiating this pretty much since I began in the job, which is nudging five years now. As soon as we began negotiating this, I was reminded of the many occasions over the previous decades when negotiations had foundered. We have gone about this very carefully and as a result we are optimistic of having a win-win situation but, most of all, providing the best outcome for children.

[4.10 pm]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Where is that in the budget papers?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is the fifth dot point on page 701.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Minister, I have raised —

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member give the page number and line item?

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Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I refer to the total cost of services under “Supporting Children and Young People in the CEO’s Care” on page 703. I have written to the Minister for Education about this issue and I am interested to know the minister’s perspective on children in care and in independent schools. I have been told anecdotally that some independent schools are reluctant, if not refusing, to take children in care. I raised this concern with the Minister for Education and she did not say that was not the case. She said that independent schools have the ability to influence the intake of children into their schools. Can the Department for Child Protection highlight any incidents of a child in care who has been declined education case management in an independent school?

Mr T.M. Murphy: Independent schools have not made a difference to our children being catered for in public schools. Certainly there has been some anxiety around the issue. However, the fundamentals remain the same; that is, all schools have the power to suspend or exclude students according to the school’s policies. Our children present a range of challenges—not all of them; many are indistinguishable from other children. However, our children certainly include a higher proportion of children who have challenging and often aggressive behaviours and so are subject to suspension and exclusion more often than the general population. We have education officers in each district whose fundamental job is to seek an educational placement for every child in the district. Those officers are always in negotiations with individual schools about maintaining educational placements where they are challenging. I have said to our staff, so no doubt members have heard about it, that I respect the Department of Education’s position on suspending and excluding students. The Department of Education has to safeguard its staff and preserve the educational environment for the whole school community. It must have that capacity. There is a natural point of tension between our department, parents of children and young people with challenging behaviours, and the schools. We will provide extra support when it is necessary and we have done that on a range of occasions. Although there might be exceptions, as a whole, the Department of Education and the Catholic school system are very responsive with our children and understand that they have an extra layer of difficulties, and they go the extra mile for them.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Does the director general identify when a school either refuses or excludes a child in care, and has the director general noticed any trends for any school that does that? If he can, will he table a list of which schools have been tracked excluding or refusing a child in care?

Mr T.M. Murphy: At any one time there will be a small group of children who are excluded from school. Often they are maintained at the district office by the education officer if there are no alternative placements. Usually, however, there is a range of alternative educational placements that can lead the way back to school. It is only a handful of students at any one time in any one district. We do not keep statistics on that because we see it as a normal part of our business; it is an individual case file matter. I would be reluctant to pore through case files to identify children and schools in particular at any one time because of the likelihood of identifying those children. I can say with confidence that although this is a constant topic of discussion with education officers and the service delivery part of the department, over the last few years we have not seen a rise in suspensions and exclusions in independent schools such that it would cause us concern. Rather, it is a continuing challenge that we face.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I refer to the hardship utility grant scheme under “Major Spending Changes” on page 699. Can the minister tell us why it was decided that the utilities should undertake HUGS applications? Why is it not seen as a conflict of interest when clients go to a utility to apply for a grant to pay that utility? Why is the government paying businesses or the government itself instead of supporting community groups that have proved time and again that they are a successful and effective means of distributing HUGS? Why the sudden reversal of thinking, when previously it was decided that a trained financial counsellor had to undertake these grants whereas now an employee of a utility can do it? What training do they have to do that?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will ask Mr Murphy to advise the member.

Mr T.M. Murphy: What the member is referring to is the direct allocation of the hardship utility grant scheme by the utility and dispensing with the requirement for someone to see a financial counsellor and that counsellor making the grant. We began this as a pilot program with two utilities around 18 months ago. Over time, the number of grants made in this way has increased. It is still not the majority of grants but it is a significant and growing number. The number of utilities using this method has expanded, and all the major utilities are now doing it. We have not observed—this is why we began it as a pilot—conflicts of interest arising. The utilities are not either particularly lax or stringent. We are finding that they are sensible in how they make those grants under the hardship utility grant scheme. Certainly financial counsellors have queried whether this is the best way to go. The issue has been caught up also with some non-recurrent financial counselling positions running out of funding; those positions having been implemented on a very clearly non-recurrent basis to deal with backlogs caused by HUGS, and during that time this direct allocation of grants has expanded. I would note that when HUGS was first conceptualised, it was the position of the Western Australian Council of Social Service that

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referral to a financial counsellor should not be part of the process. Therefore, our streamlining of the process—if you want to characterise it as that—allowing for direct allocations from the utilities has been met very positively by WACOSS, which sees it as a way of getting more grants to more people more quickly. I think the reality of financial counselling is that many people were referred, not everybody went, and a lot of people simply went through the motions. We therefore think that having the option available to all clients but not making it compulsory is the most efficient and effective way of delivering this service.

[4.20 pm]

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Madam Chair, I will provide the figures. There has been an increase from \$10.12 million in 2011–12 to \$11.7 million in 2012–13 for HUGS. There is still \$2.139 million available for financial counselling out of the \$11.7 million. That is a reduction from the previous year, as has been pointed out; nevertheless it is still a quite significant component available for counselling. There has been an increase of \$4.245 million in the amount available for grants to people to assist them with their energy costs.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I have a further question. Firstly, I dispute that the backlog came because of HUGS. The backlog came as more people were trying to get HUGS because of the increases in electricity charges.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Which would have occurred whether Labor was in office or the Liberal and National Parties were in office.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: It occurred while the Liberal Party was in office.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Yes, but the fact is it would have occurred under either government.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: It occurred while the Liberal Party was in office.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, members! Your question, member for Joondalup.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I will take the minister through a scenario to show him why it is important for a financial counsellor and not for one of the utilities to administer the scheme. This is an actual case study but no names will be mentioned. A particular client sought a financial counselling appointment. The client is a single parent with one dependent child and she relies on the single parenting payment as her only source of income. After paying for private rent, she has only \$110 left per fortnight for food bills and transport expenses. The client had a Synergy bill for \$461.80. Synergy would have processed the HUGS grant for \$392.52, which is 85 per cent of the bill, and the client would have been told she would have to attend a financial counselling appointment for HUGS to be approved. That is how it goes. But what actually happened is Synergy did not refer the client to a financial counsellor, Synergy paid that amount and did not leave the required minimum balance of \$100 to go towards another bill. Whereas if the client had gone to the financial counsellor and got the amount of \$392 paid, she could have then got the other 15 per cent paid through emergency relief—bearing in mind that this is a single mum in dire straits—and then there would have been a balance of \$100 left to go to another utility bill. The full amount of the HUGS allocation, therefore, could have been paid; whereas if people go straight to the utility and not to the financial counsellor, they actually lose out because they miss out on the 15 per cent through emergency relief and also on using the remaining \$100 balance for another bill. That is one of the problems with the way HUGS is operating now. Can I have an explanation of why it is better to do it through the utility than through a financial counsellor who can overview the whole situation?

And obviously we did not get a HUGS grant for Parliament!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am advised that the option is still available to individuals as to which path they go down and it would have been available in this case.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: But if the person has gone to the utility and got that amount paid, they are immediately cut off from getting the balance if they do not know—quite often a lot of these people do not know—about the difference. If they get the 85 per cent paid by the utility, they still have to find the remaining 15 per cent but they have lost \$100, which could be put to another bill if it had been done properly through a financial counsellor. It seems really odd that we now do it through the utility. The utility, of course, is going to pay itself first and worry about the client situation afterwards. The other part of my question is: what training have the utility people got in handling the financial counselling part of HUGS? I know they do not provide the financial counselling, but if they looked at the situation, the advice would be, “Go to your financial counsellor because you are going to get a better outcome.” Has training been given to the people in the utilities to assess HUGS recipients and say, for example, “Sorry, the best thing for you to do is to go to a financial counsellor? You can get 85 per cent of your bill paid, you can get the other 15 per cent through emergency relief and you will still have \$100 left in the kitty to go to your water bill?”

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: I agree that it is desirable for the utilities to have people who are knowledgeable about the various alternatives and the effects of decisions made under how assistance is accessed. I do not know in detail what training is provided but I am advised there is training provided by this department to the utility providers. It may be that it needs to be renewed. It may be that this matter needs to be drawn to the attention of the Minister for Energy. Perhaps the member would like to do that more explicitly by writing to him. It is a valid point but it is the trade-off, I guess, about how much of the not insignificant amount of funding available for HUGS is available for providing grants to applicants, as opposed to how much is allocated for financial counselling, which of course does not directly reduce the impact of their electricity bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to inform you that Parliamentary Services are aware of the lights and are trying to get them back on.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: It was a lightning strike!

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you. We are ready to move on. I am conscious of the time.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a further question on HUGS. Under the previous scheme using a financial counsellor, persons attending could have a discussion about managing their whole household budget. It is not just a question of being in distress about one bill. Has any consideration been given to revisiting the current scheme? As the member for Joondalup said, HUGS is really about the limit and about the here and now and paying one bill only. What people need is actually broader advice.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Counselling is certainly still available. It is not compulsory; that is the difference, I think. It is still available for people who want to make use of it, and obviously in many cases they would be strongly advised to. My understanding is that financial counselling is also provided through various organisations in the non-government sector separate from HUGS, and this department does fund some of that.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It has de-funded some too, minister.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: No doubt there are reasons for that. The member might want to debate whether the reasons are valid, I suppose, but I will ask Mr Murphy to comment on that point if he wishes.

[4.30 pm]

Mr T.M. Murphy: We would say that no defunding has occurred. Some 12 positions—this has been well and truly in the public realm—were funded on a one-off basis to meet a backlog of HUGS applications. All the agencies took those contracts knowing that the funding was non-recurrent. However, as happens in these situations, the agencies would prefer to have kept those positions and believe that they could have kept those positions busy. However, they were funded for a specific purpose; they were contracted for a finite period and those contracts expired.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is it possible for the minister to provide by way of supplementary information a list of locations where these applications for assistance were made?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Do you mean financial counselling?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: No.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: We would like by supplementary information for where HUGS grants have gone if it can be broken down by region.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: You even have it!

Mr T.M. Murphy: There are quite a lot of parliamentary questions to this effect in the upper house.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I do not know how current it is; that is the only issue.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will provide the information for the period from July 2011 to March 2012. Out of a total number of 13 294 grants paid in that period, 1.11 per cent were in the Gascoyne; 2.52 per cent, Goldfields–Esperance region; 3.75 per cent, great southern; 1.9 per cent, the Kimberley; 67.35 per cent, metropolitan region; 3.35 per cent, mid west; 7.92 per cent, Peel; 1.7 per cent, Pilbara; 7.27 per cent, the south west; and 3.14 per cent, wheatbelt. Very broadly, I guess that accords with the population distribution across the state, although in the metropolitan region it is about 75 per cent if I recall correctly, but I see that 67 per cent of grants have gone to the metropolitan region.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I would like the breakdown by way of suburb for the metropolitan area if that can be done.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Is it possible to get the dollar value included in that? You said 13 000 HUGS grants.

Mr T.M. Murphy: Yes.

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Mr J.H.D. DAY: We will provide a breakdown, as far as possible, of the distribution of grants that have been provided in the metropolitan region by district, postcode or whatever is readily available, and the dollar value.

[*Supplementary Information No B51.*]

The CHAIRMAN: I am conscious of the time. I would like everyone to have a chance to ask their questions. I request that the questions be short.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I have a very short question.

The CHAIRMAN: It is the member for Girrawheen’s question, member for Joondalup. You had a question, member for Girrawheen?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Not on Communities.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: There are two items on page 699, firstly, additional indexation of the non-government human services sector. There is nothing in the budget until \$4.583 million in 2015–16. Is that the additional 10 per cent on top of the 15 per cent that has already been received and will now not come into play until 2015–16?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am advised that to complete the 2015–16 escalation process there was a need to officially escalate non-government human service contract expenditure that falls under the non-government human services sector indexation policy. The 2015–16 indexation rate has been calculated using the current 2014–15 projection of 4.25 per cent with, as indicated here, \$4.583 million allocated for 2015–16. Prior to that year it has been funded in last year’s budget, as I understand it.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: On the same page for homelessness, there is an amount for the estimated actual for 2011–12 of \$4.056 million and the budget estimate for 2012–13 of \$4.231 million and nothing in the out years. Can we assume the homelessness problem has been fixed in the next budget?

Mr T.M. Murphy: Essentially, the National Affordable Housing Agreement expires at the end of 2013. Continuing funding for all homelessness is subject to the renegotiation of that agreement.

The appropriation was recommended.