

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Sabine Winton; Ms Merome Beard; Ms Kim Giddens; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms
Cassandra Rowe; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Chris Tallentire

Division 35: Communities — Services 1 to 6, Early Childhood Education, Child Protection, Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Community Services, \$1 154 930 000 —

Ms A.E. Kent, Chair.

Ms S.E. Winton, Minister for Early Childhood Education.

Mr M. Rowe, Director General.

Ms M. Samuels, Deputy Director General, Community Services.

Ms C. Irwin, Assistant Director General, Strategy and Partnerships.

Mr W. Millen, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr P. Payne, Executive Director, Regulation and Quality.

Dr N. Leggett, Director, Office of Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Just a reminder that we are on only services 1 to 6 in division 35. I give the call to the Leader of the Liberal Party.

[10.00 am]

Ms L. METTAM: I will return to where I started. I refer to page 502 in budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the extension of Target 120. I note that there is a reduction of \$3 million in 2022–23, with additional funding being provided to 2024–25. Given the government has consistently pointed to this program as one that has reduced youth issues, can the minister explain why it is funded only to 2024–25?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for the opportunity to talk about Target 120, as I have done on numerous occasions in this place, and the importance of this program and the impact it is having on young people's lives. As the member is aware, we have now invested more than \$43 million in this early intervention program, which shows the government's commitment to tackling what are longstanding and complex issues for some of our young people. As we know, the heart of this program is trying to intervene in young people's lives, particularly young people who are at risk of offending, and trying to turn them away from the justice system.

I have had the opportunity to travel throughout the state to meet with the various service providers that are rolling out the program—from Kununurra to Newman and Derby, where we recently announced the local service provider. Local people's enthusiasm for and commitment to this program is quite extraordinary. We know that if trusted people work with young people locally, we have more chance of making a difference in their lives. Some of the anecdotal stories that I have heard about the program's successes with individual young people around the state have been quite incredible.

The member would also know that, through the budget process, we have announced an additional \$11.1 million to ensure that all sites will be funded until 30 June 2025. That has been welcomed throughout the state by the service providers that are doing this extraordinary work. Referring to the line item, I can say that the negative \$3 million reflects the 2022–23 estimated underspend, which has been carried over to 2024–25. This brings the total funding to \$10.9 million for the 2024–25 year.

Ms L. METTAM: If the program is so good, why does the funding stop after 2024–25?

Ms S.E. WINTON: All the Target 120 sites had different start times. The first 11 sites were originally rolled out in 2019 or something, and then we made a commitment for a further nine sites. The funding varies depending on how long the programs have been running in particular locations, but I can tell the member that the announcement of some \$11 million to provide certainty for the Target 120 program to continue until June 2025 has been really welcomed throughout the state.

Ms L. METTAM: Is that really certainty if it is just until 2025?

Ms S.E. WINTON: That is a great deal of certainty. Some of these Target 120 sites have been operating since 2019, and so to back them and to continue the funding until the end of June 2025 absolutely does that.

Ms L. METTAM: Is Target 120 now operational in Derby? The announcement has been made, but is it actually in operation?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes. I not only went up to Derby recently to announce that, but also had the great opportunity to speak with Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation, the local Aboriginal-controlled organisation that is running the program now. It is up and running, and I am confident it will have great results. I think ENAC is a good example of the kind of Aboriginal-controlled organisation that is best placed to do really good work with Target 120. It is already doing extraordinary work in a range of areas with at-risk youth, so I am looking forward to the outcomes that it will be able to produce with young people in Derby.

Ms L. METTAM: How many children are currently engaged with the Target 120 program in Derby?

Ms S.E. WINTON: As of April 2023, a total of 259 participants across all the sites in Western Australia have taken part in the program.

Ms L. METTAM: Of those 259, how many are involved in Derby?

Ms S.E. WINTON: It varies from site to site at any given point in time. Each Target 120 site works with up to 10 young people at any given point in time. I also want to emphasise something that has been highlighted to me repeatedly when I go to talk with people who are delivering the program: it is not just the 10 individual young people. Each individual young person has family members, which affects the case load for the people involved. They might be looking after 10 young people, but each of those young people could have 5 to 10 family members who are also indirectly engaged. When I talk about family members, of course, I talk about siblings, because these young people do not live in isolation. Although the primary target, so to speak, of the case load and the work being done with Target 120 is that young person, success very much depends on that secondary but really important work with the whole family.

[10.10 am]

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm that at least 10 children are involved in the Target 120 program in Derby?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No. I can confirm that each Target 120 site will work with up to 10 people at any given point in time. That varies from site to site on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis as young people transition out of the program. It varies depending on whether young people disengage from the program. The number of people they work with at any one point in time varies from site to site across the state and from week to week.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm that at least five people are involved? The minister has made an announcement. I just want to get an idea or some confirmation that at least five children are engaged in the program in Derby.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Is the member specifically asking about Derby?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The announcement has been made that Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation is going to be engaged in delivering Target 120 in Derby. I am advised that it has recruited two caseworkers who will do the work. As part of that process, the client selection—I hate the word “client”—or the young person selection endorsement is happening right now through that local interagency working group. The selection of the young people to participate in the program is a complex process involving various agencies that come together to prioritise and highlight young people who would be suitable for Target 120. Of course, a very important and complex piece of work then has to happen in reaching out to those young people and families, because it is a voluntary system whereby they have to come on board. I am told that the engagement process with young people is commencing, but the specific work with those young people will commence in June.

Ms L. METTAM: Just to clarify, the announcement has been made, the department has employed and recruited —

Ms S.E. WINTON: Not we; we have not recruited. ENAC has the responsibility of recruiting the caseworkers who will deliver the program. They are employed by the corporation.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the minister anticipate that there will be, on average, 10 children, but they are yet to be part of the program? Does she anticipate that will happen sometime in June?

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Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes. As I said before, some of those young people have already been identified as part of the lead interagency process, but the specific work of putting together a plan and engaging specifically and regularly with those young people will commence once those officers have been employed by the service provider.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I also ask about some of the other sites? What is the situation in Fitzroy Crossing? Is Fitzroy Crossing supporting, on average, 10 children through the Target 120 program?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Of the 20 sites, I can confirm that we do not have a service provider in place in Fitzroy Crossing yet. We have been working very hard with the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre and potentially some other service providers on getting them to become involved with Target 120. What has been made very clear to me as I travel around the regions is that not just government agencies or private businesses, but also many of our not-for-profits and local service providers are facing challenges with recruitment for their programs. That is creating difficulties.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I also ask the same question about the Carnarvon, Newman and Mandurah sites? Is it the same situation there as it is in Fitzroy Crossing?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No. Fitzroy Crossing is not up and running yet. Sorry—what were the other ones?

Ms L. METTAM: Carnarvon, Newman and Mandurah.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Aside from Fitzroy Crossing, the ones that the member mentioned are up and running and I can give her specifics about them in a moment. I also point out that although the Department of Communities is finding it difficult to procure a local service provider to do it, it does not mean that Target 120 is not able to get up and running. We have some examples, such as Kalgoorlie. I was in Kalgoorlie to hear about how Target 120 is going. That is led by a community youth officer through the Department of Communities, which is rolling out Target 120. It may well be that if Fitzroy Crossing continues to be a challenge, that is what will happen—the Department of Communities will lead it at those sites where it cannot get local service providers, which are facing similar issues with workforce challenges, as we all are. I will go through them. Carnarvon is being led by Ngala community services and it is up and running. Which other ones did the member mention?

Ms L. METTAM: Newman and Mandurah.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I was in Newman for the announcement of that one. Again, I think that is a site where we are going to see some great results, because it is run by Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa. A very strong local Aboriginal-controlled organisation has taken on the Target 120 program there. And?

Ms L. METTAM: Mandurah and Karratha, which I did not say before.

Ms S.E. WINTON: In Mandurah, it is led by the Department of Communities through a community youth officer. In Karratha, it is being run by the Robe River Kuruma Aboriginal Corporation, which I also met with. I think it is also going to do good work because it is strong in the community.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you for the response, minister. Can I confirm that Carnarvon, Newman, Mandurah and Karratha are supporting, on average, 10 children a week, or are they like Derby, which has been announced and has the staff but is not supporting children until later?

Ms S.E. WINTON: What I can confirm is a repeat of what I said before. The Target 120 model at each site has the capacity for each of the organisations to support up to 10 young people at a time. That will vary from site to site, from week to week and from month to month depending on the individual circumstances of the young people they are engaging with.

Ms L. METTAM: As we teased out with Derby, children are currently being supported. Currently in Carnarvon, are five or 10 children, on average, being supported, or are we waiting until June?

[10.20 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will repeat what I said before: I am not going to give the member specifics about how many young people are in the program at any one point in time for any of the sites around the state because I think it does not paint the full picture. As I explained to the member, it varies from time to time depending on the circumstances that are happening in that young person's life. I can tell the member that the state government has made a significant commitment to this program of over some \$40 million. In this budget we have indicated our ongoing prioritisation of this program, because we know that it works, by given certainty of funding to June 2025. At all sites in all the locations, including the ones that the member has mentioned, the service providers have been given the capacity to do that work.

Ms L. METTAM: It does not seem there is much certainty. The funding is there but I am seeking a simple assurance that at least five or 10 children are being supported in Carnarvon, Newman, Mandurah and Karratha. We know that Fitzroy Crossing is not happening at the moment and Derby has been announced, but no kids are being supported.

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Is the minister able to provide any assurance that at least five or 10 children are being supported at those sites of high need in Carnarvon, Newman and Mandurah?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think the member is trying to lead me to say something that I cannot guarantee at any given point in time. I have seen many examples, and been briefed on data, when at one point in time a particular site in the state is supporting 10 people and a month later that is down to three people. It varies from time to time. I am not going to give the member that assurance for any particular site that there are X amount of young people being supported. I cannot do that, and I am not in control of the complex variables that are taken into account that result in those sorts of differences in numbers. I can reassure the member—I am particularly proud of this—that the Target 120 program, which has seen significant funding by this government over a long period and has been extended to those 20 sites, is a focus for this government. The service providers have been resourced accordingly and are continually supported through the Department of Communities and the process of that interagency support as part of this model.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a further question on this. I know we have been through it, but can the minister confirm that the Target 120 program is currently supporting children in Karratha?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I can confirm that the Target 120 program in Karratha is up and running and that young people in Karratha are being supported through this program.

Ms M. BEARD: The minister mentioned that Target 120 is voluntary. I want to clarify whether it is the youth who volunteer or the youth and their parents or family who volunteer for the program?

Ms S.E. WINTON: It is both because, as the member can imagine, if a young person volunteers to participate but is not getting any support from their parents, it is not going to work very well in addressing some of those underlying issues that cause young people to not stay on the right path. It is important that we remember that it is a partnership that works best on a voluntary basis whereby a young person and their family step up because they want support to turn that young person's life around.

Ms M. BEARD: I understand that. If there is a situation with youth who would be happy to see change, but if they do not have that support, could they still join the program, or would they need their parents to?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I know what the member is saying because I can appreciate that if a young person wants to change their life and their family might not be supportive, we would never want to turn that young person away. I know that a lot of work goes on with families to support that young person to get the family to also participate. We would be fairly confident that people who run these programs out in communities, including in Carnarvon, where I think Ngala run the program, are very connected into the community in many instances. The whole point of this model is that the organisations that are running these programs have a certain degree of knowledge, trust and experience within those communities, and have the best outcomes in terms of getting families to participate in the program too.

Ms M. BEARD: In the case that someone disengages or there is a youth who wants help, what program do they get steered to if the Target 120 program cannot help them?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Of course, I appreciate the emphasis on Target 120 and that is good, but it is not the only thing that government does. It is not the only thing that the Department of Communities does to support young people. There is a range of programs including many specifically in Carnarvon that focus on working with young people who may or may not be able to qualify or be part of the Target 120 program or, likewise, are part of the Target 120 program but for whatever reason self-select to not be part of the program.

Ms M. BEARD: Can the minister give me some examples of those programs and what they might be?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I can speak more globally about some of the services and programs that we have for at-risk young people. I can localise it for the member. Target 120 is only one part of that work on some of the longstanding and complex issues in Carnarvon. Some of the other investments in Carnarvon include the intensive family support team, which works intensively with families; HelpingMinds family and carer support; Ngala community services parenting service; the Gascoyne Women's Refuge; the Carnarvon Youth Outreach Services; the Aboriginal Community Connectors program; Cadets WA and Bush Rangers WA; and of course support services through other agencies, including the WA Country Health Service, for alcohol and other drug counselling and mental health supports. There is a broad range of services that can connect with at-risk young people who either are not eligible for the Target 120 program or, for a variety of reasons, choose to leave the program.

[10.30 am]

Ms L. METTAM: By way of supplementary information, can the minister provide the number of children who were currently engaged at the beginning of this month in the Target 120 program in Carnarvon, Newman, Mandurah and Karratha? I understand that Fitzroy Crossing has not yet been successful in attaining staff and Derby has announced that no children are currently being supported.

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Ms S.E. WINTON: It is my understanding that questions relating specifically to Target 120 have previously been put on notice, and I would encourage the member to do the same.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: My question is about the enhanced family and domestic violence response teams and I refer to page 502, budget paper No 2. I know from my experience when my husband was a police officer that it is difficult to talk about family and domestic violence without talking about alcohol as well. Therefore, measures like the banned drinkers register in Carnarvon and Gascoyne will certainly help to reduce the rates of family and domestic violence. I digress a little bit. I understand that the enhanced family and domestic violence response teams involve the police. Can the minister tell me more about these FDV response teams? How many are there? How are the FDV response teams being enhanced?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you, member for Bateman. Family and domestic violence response teams co-locate with the police, child protection staff and family and domestic violence advocates employed by the community services sector coordinated response service. After a police call-out to an incident, the FDVR teams assess the incident and follow up with support. Like the hubs, which are a really innovative approach, the family and domestic violence response teams represent a joined-up response to family and domestic violence, and there are 17 of these teams right across the state.

During COVID, in July 2020, the government boosted the coordinated response service staff. In the midyear review, we announced over \$11 million over four years for 34 family safety coordinator positions to be added to the existing teams. Those new positions will be phased in, with the first phase commencing from July. Two staff will be added to three regional and four metro FDVRTs, working up to two extra FTEs in every location. Importantly, the new staff will be focused on the families at greatest risk of family and domestic violence, and will give those families more intensive support.

This initiative is very important in two critical ways. One way is to actually respond to crisis call-out incidents. The other way is the amount of work that is happening beyond that critical incident to support victim-survivors and to de-escalate and stop further violence from happening, which should not be underestimated.

Ms L. METTAM: I note there has been a significant increase—over 30 per cent—in FDV cases since 2016–17. Why is this response team program being implemented for only a year? Why is there only one year of funding?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to elaborate.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you very much for the question. I think the matter that the member is referring to is the coordinated response service, which has some additional funding in 2023–24 to maintain the current resourcing level. The one-year extension of that additional funding will enable further work with service providers to ensure that the new family safety coordinator positions are distinct yet complementary, with no gaps or duplications. We will see how the intersection of these two programs goes before making subsequent decisions about the extension or otherwise of the coordinated response service.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I am really interested to hear about the family and domestic violence responses around the Pets in Crisis program and the like. It is clear that all the bodies of evidence we now have show that there is an unequivocal link between family and domestic violence and the most vulnerable members of the family in that it stops the victims of violence from leaving the home because of attacks or threats to the nonhuman members of the family—their companion animals. Can the minister give me some more information about the Pets in Crisis program? How is it going? How is the expansion to that program going? The other program that is also linked is the BARK program. Sorry, I am being a bit quick because I have to leave shortly, but I would really like to hear about both programs. What is the minister's take on how effectively those programs are helping potential and actual victims of family and domestic violence to extricate themselves and their fur family members from violence? I refer to page 521, budget paper No 2, under election commitments and the Pets in Crisis expansion.

The CHAIR: Thank you, and can I just reiterate that questions and answers should be short and concise, please.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you to the member for Maylands for pointing out the budget line item right at the end and not at the beginning!

Ms L.L. BAKER: I just wanted to give you some extra work, minister.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member for Maylands' strong advocacy in this area over a long period is well noted. The member will be very happy about the work that we are doing in this field. It was originally a first-term election commitment to the RSPCA in the metropolitan area, and then we had the second-term election commitment to expand it to Bunbury, Busselton and Albany. Pets are often a reason people may delay seeking help, with one study reporting that one-third of women delayed seeking refuge due to concerns about what would happen to their pets if they escaped to a refuge.

The Pets in Crisis program places pets with volunteer animal carers who temporarily and lovingly look after those pets until it is safe for them to be reunited with their owners. The statistics are interesting in that from 2017

to December 2022, this program has helped over 260 pets—not just cats and dogs, but chooks, guinea pigs, rabbits and parrots. More than \$1.34 million has been invested in this much-needed and very important program as part of our overall response to the prevention of family and domestic violence.

[10.40 am]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 513, care arrangements and support services for children in the CEO’s care. What is the total number of children currently in the CEO’s care?

Ms S.E. WINTON: As of today, there are 5 122 children in care.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the department account for all those children?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for the question. As we know, young people, particularly teenagers, sometimes make decisions outside of what we might like those decisions to be. Of the 5 122 children in care, we need to acknowledge that in many instances, those children have suffered trauma in their lives and in some instances, they have complex issues. The majority of kids in care are in safe, supported placements and in that regard, I cannot speak highly enough of foster carers and others who do this important work of supporting our young people. Unfortunately, sometimes a very small percentage of young people choose to leave their placements. I can reassure the member that Communities and the Western Australia Police Force work closely together to continue to support those young people. I might ask the director general to provide more detailed advice.

Mr M. Rowe: As the minister highlighted, from time to time young children will make their own choices and leave approved placements. In many instances in which that occurs—I am talking about a very small number of children at any one time—our case workers remain in contact with those young people even if they do not know exactly where they are. Often they connect with them through the joys of social media—that is a good way of engaging with young people—and their extended family. The way we understand that situation within the department is that there are effectively two types of situations in which a young person leaves their care. In one instance, we describe that as “unknown, but in contact with them” so we are able to remain in contact with that young person. In instances in which we genuinely do not know where those young people are and they are effectively missing, we work very closely with the WA police to look for them. I want to give some assurance to the member and others that, as the minister said, the department works very hard when children go missing. We actively go to the sites where we think they might be and contact their extended family and talk to them about where they might be. The good news is that so far, all those young people have returned. Our experience has been that when we go looking for them, we eventually find them. It is not great when these young people go missing but we take it very seriously when they do and we work closely with the police. The member would be aware that from time to time we put out notices about young children in care who are missing. That is done very carefully because we do not want to necessarily exacerbate the situation or risk to the young person; sometimes it is harder to find them when they know that people are looking for them. We have to be sensitive about that. We also understand that there are restrictions in the legislation about identifying young people, so, again, when we publish photographs or put out media statements, we are cautious and careful about so doing. But as the minister said, at any given moment a tiny proportion of our 5 122 children are genuinely missing and we do everything we can to find them as quickly as possible and reunite them with their placements.

Ms L. METTAM: I understand the challenge of this issue. I take from the director general’s comments that no children are missing at this point in time and the department is aware of the whereabouts of all the children.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am not sure that the director general said that no children are missing at this moment in time. The point he was trying to make was that at any given time, it is a very small number of the total cohort of 5 122 young people for whom that is the case, as the director general described.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister advise how many children are missing at this point in time?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I note that the member in the upper house quite often receives statistics on this. I am advised that as of 23 May, four children are recorded as “unknown, but in contact” and three children are recorded as missing. As the member can appreciate, that would have been different last week and it may be different next week. It emphasises the point I was trying to make that of the 5 122 children in care, the vast majority are in stable and safe care arrangements and getting the supports they need.

Ms L. METTAM: How many children under the care of the CEO of Communities are currently in Banksia Hill Detention Centre?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The number of children in care who are in Banksia Hill Detention Centre is dynamic and changes regularly, similar to the way the numbers change in terms of the question that the member previously asked. Every effort is made to support children in care and, importantly, deter them from involvement in the criminal justice system. Generally, the number of children in care represents a small proportion of the total population at Banksia Hill and a very small proportion of the overall number of children in care, as was previously stated. Those

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children continue to be supported and there is ongoing planning for their reintegration into the community. Since February 2019, the government has funded a full-time co-located senior child protection worker at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. This worker is responsible for supporting young people in or at risk of entering care, ensuring that the best interests of children in care are met whilst they are in Banksia Hill.

[10.50 am]

Ms L. METTAM: We know that four children under the Department of Communities' care are missing at the moment. Is the minister able to say how many children are at Banksia Hill at this point in time?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I suggest that if the member wants that information, she put the question on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Why is the minister unable to answer? It is a very simple question about the Department of Communities. The minister must have an idea of how many children are at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. We know that four children under the department's purview are missing. How many children are at Banksia Hill?

The CHAIR: The minister has answered the question.

Ms S.E. WINTON: As with missing children, the number of children in care at Banksia Hill varies from time to time. I have a concern around providing specific information about children in care at Banksia Hill. It is a small number at any point in time. I am loath to do that as it would potentially identify those young people. I would prefer, and I think it would be more appropriate, that the member put the question on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Has the minister been gagged as well?

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: That is not relevant.

Ms L. METTAM: It is pretty relevant.

The CHAIR: I will not allow that.

Ms C.M. ROWE: I refer to page 521 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the details of controlled grants and subsidies, under which is the boost to primary prevention in family and domestic violence services. I understand that these grants were announced by Minister McGurk late last year. As a former financial planner, I was really pleased to see that one of these grants was for the financial toolkit of the Women at Risk Trust. Could the minister please tell me a little bit more about this grant and how it will work for victims of family and domestic violence?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Belmont for her question. I know that as a former financial planner, she is particularly supportive of and keen on the work that we are doing to support people who experience family and domestic violence. In terms of the financial toolkit, a \$99 000 primary prevention grant was announced in December 2022. Funding has been given to 17 organisations under that \$3 million election commitment that is all about focusing and placing a priority on primary prevention—that is, stopping violence before it starts. Of course, family and domestic violence takes many forms. One of the forms experienced by many women is financial abuse that restricts women's independence. Many victims do not recognise that that is a form of family and domestic violence. Two-thirds of people do not know that there is help out there or where to go to get help, so it is important that this toolkit provides that access. It is an online resource that provides advice on different stages of an abusive relationship. That is really important, because that is where the preventive aspect comes in. If more women understand early on some of the things that are happening in their lives, we can hope to stop the escalation of that abuse. The toolkit provides tips on prevention at home, work and in the community, and much-needed information on financial literacy, budgeting, saving, credit, debt and super. Many people in relationships do not have a shared responsibility for financial management. This can be highlighted at those times when an abusive relationship gets worse and women struggle with financial management. It is really interesting to note that the toolkit has a thousand users weekly, which is quite incredible.

Ms C.M. ROWE: Was that a thousand?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am told that it is a thousand users weekly. Importantly, the toolkit is translated into some 10 languages. That is an important aspect as well, because, as we know, family and domestic violence reaches everywhere in our community, including our Aboriginal and multicultural communities. I think this is a great program.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 504 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and paragraph 15 under significant issues impacting the agency. I note that between 2020–21 and 2021–22, the total number of children in care reduced by 2.8 per cent. Can the minister advise whether this is a reduction in the number of children entering care or the result of more children leaving care or an issue around the capacity to provide support?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to answer.

Mr M. Rowe: It is a reduction in the number of children entering care.

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Ms L. METTAM: Are any children in care staying with reportable offenders? Can the minister confirm that that is not the case?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will let the director general answer.

Mr M. Rowe: I thank the member for the question. It is obviously really important that we make sure that children are safe when they come into care, regardless of their placement type. One way we can achieve that is by making sure that the carers of children have a working with children check. That makes sure that we do not allow people who have that history to be in the same environment as those children.

Ms L. METTAM: The reason I ask is that issues were raised previously by the Commissioner for Children and Young People about children in care being in the same group home or facility as reportable offenders. I am just seeking some confirmation that that is currently not happening. I am referring to residential care homes where there might be another child with a history of sexual assaults. The Commissioner for Children and Young People has previously said that that is not a unique event.

[11.00 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse defined “harmful sexual behaviours” as a term that covers a broad continuum of behaviours from those that are developmentally inappropriate to criminal behaviours such as sexual assault. The continuum of harmful sexual behaviours and the diversity of children’s experiences and circumstances means that no one response or intervention is suitable for all children with harmful sexual behaviours. The Department of Communities is progressing a range of reforms to contemporise and safeguard out-of-home care, including by improving the identification and assessment of and response to harmful sexual behaviours in response to the royal commission’s recommendations and those made in the Commissioner for Children and Young People’s independent review. Communities has provided grant funding of \$2.4 million over three years to the Australian Centre for Child Protection WA to deliver a work plan to improve responses to children with harmful sexual behaviours. I might ask the director general to elaborate on the reportable offences.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you for the question. As the minister pointed out, we are obviously doing a lot of work in relation to harmful sexual behaviours in residential care settings. As the minister said, that behaviour can be on the spectrum from age-inappropriate behaviour all the way through to potentially harmful behaviour. We make sure there is an adequate safety plan around those children regardless of their care setting and for the children who they might be resident with. However, I can confirm that there are no children who are reportable offenders who are in residence with other children. That was one of the issues that the commission’s report raised. The matter of harmful sexual behaviour is complex, and that is why we, along with other jurisdictions, are looking at what more we can do to manage those behaviours when they express themselves in the behaviour of children and young people.

Ms L. METTAM: How many complaints has the department received in the last 12 months about children in care who may have been exposed to others who have exhibited harmful sexual behaviours?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can I just ask what budget paper reference that question is about?

The CHAIR: Leader of the Liberal Party, if you can allocate that to a line item in the budget, that would be great.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the fifteenth significant issue affecting the agency and the reduction in the number of children entering care.

The CHAIR: Is that on page 504?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am trying to work out the relevance to the question that the member is asking.

The CHAIR: Could you make your question a little clearer, please?

Ms L. METTAM: I am trying to establish whether the reduction in the number of children in care is a result of more children leaving care because they are exposed to people with harmful sexual behaviours.

The CHAIR: Minister, if you choose not to add anything, that is perfectly okay. You can pass.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am not accepting that.

The CHAIR: Moving on to a new question.

Ms L. METTAM: To clarify one of the questions I asked, are there currently any children in care residing with others who have exhibited harmful sexual behaviours?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thought we had already answered that.

The CHAIR: Does the Leader of the Liberal Party have a new question?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. I refer to the sixteenth significant issue on page 504, which is the Aboriginal child placement principle. I note that the key effectiveness indicator table on page 508 states that only 65 per cent of Aboriginal children in the CEO's care are placed in accordance with this principle. What action is the department undertaking to address this issue, which has been ongoing for many years?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to answer that in the first instance.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you very much for the question. We are working really hard as a department to try to find additional care places for children, especially Aboriginal children in care. The member might recall that amendments were made recently to our enabling legislation that reinforced our commitment to the Aboriginal children placement principles. That requires us to try, whenever possible, to locate Aboriginal children in care with Aboriginal carers from their own country in the first instance and then we work through a hierarchy if those people cannot be found. It is a challenging target to achieve, but we unashamedly do not walk back from that because it is something that we want to get better at doing as an organisation, and we are doing a lot to try to achieve that.

One of the other reforms that has been put in place is to consult with Aboriginal representative organisations. That is also a requirement under the new legislation. That will require us to consult with local Aboriginal people when we make choices about placing Aboriginal children when they come into care, or even before they come into care. That consultation also gives us an opportunity for local Aboriginal people to recommend to us who might be prepared to care for children in their communities. That is coupled with a strong emphasis on earlier intervention and working more closely with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations through things like Aboriginal family-led decision-making. We are trying very hard to support both the spirit and intent of the legislation, which is around encouraging Aboriginal people and families to be more in control of their children's futures.

A whole range of factors play into our capacity to find Aboriginal carers. We are working very hard to do that, including through additional resourcing, as I said, through the Aboriginal representative organisations, which is being piloted at two sites. As I said, it is a challenge, but we do not step back from it. We fully appreciate that we need to continue to work on it because we know that Aboriginal children thrive best when they are with Aboriginal people and close to culture and country and are connected to their people.

Ms L. METTAM: Where are the 19 new properties going to be located, and how will they provide culturally appropriate care?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Which line item is that?

Ms L. METTAM: It is the last sentence at the same paragraph, which refers to acquiring 19 additional properties.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to answer.

Mr M. Rowe: We are acquiring properties for two different reasons. The member might be aware that we currently have a few more than 20 residential care facilities that the department operates across the state. There are around 100 children in those facilities across Western Australia at the moment. As part of our program to deal with occupational violence and aggression, we are trying to make sure that we buy sufficient homes so that there are no more than four children in any one of those homes at any time because that allows for a much more therapeutic care setting for those children in the department's residential care. The member might also be referring to the out-of-home care reform program, which the government is supporting. Through that, we have been funded to purchase an additional 19 properties across the state. There will be one in each of our districts, so they will genuinely be across the state. Through the Out of Home Care reform program, we are designing some new forms of care for both temporary and emergency accommodation such that if children come into our care urgently, which sometimes happens, we have the capacity for our partners in service delivery to put those children into a temporary care arrangement over a weekend or for however long it might take until we find them a substantive placement. The 19 properties that I think the member referred to will amount to a total investment of \$13.5 million. They will be located in each of our districts across the state to provide some additional care options that we currently do not have.

Ms L. METTAM: I would like to have that spelled out, I guess. When the director general says "in each of the districts across the state", I assume he means in the regional areas as well, given the nature of what we are talking about here.

Mr M. Rowe: That is correct. We have 17 child protection districts across the state in both metropolitan and regional areas.

The CHAIR: The committee will now take a short break and we will recommence at 11.20 am.

Meeting suspended from 11.11 to 11.20 am

The CHAIR: I give the call to the member for North West Central.

Ms M. BEARD: I want to seek more clarity around the 19 houses and the regional jurisdictions. Where might those properties be located across the regional areas?

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Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to provide more detail.

Mr M. Rowe: I am sorry. I do not have that detail with me today about exactly where the properties that have been purchased are located. We have already purchased, I think, eight of the 19—it may even be more than that. But as I said, we have a firm commitment to find those properties in all our child protection districts across the state. I do not have the specifics about their locations with me today.

Ms M. BEARD: The director general said “child protection districts”. Can he elaborate on what that means?

The CHAIR: Sorry, through the minister.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you, director general.

Mr M. Rowe: I may refer that question to the deputy director general for community services who is a very longstanding and experienced child protection person. She will be able to explain a bit more about how the child protection districts are structured across the state.

Ms M. Samuels: There are 17 districts. Does the member want me to go through just the regional ones?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, thank you.

Ms M. Samuels: There is one in Broome, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Port Hedland, Karratha, Newman and—this is a real test—Kalgoorlie.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am sure that information is readily available.

Ms M. Samuels: We can provide the member with that information. They are all in the regions.

Ms M. BEARD: I will explain why I asked about the transitional housing and the jurisdictions. I assume that there is a property in Geraldton—there would be. Let us say there is a need in Mt Magnet, Meekatharra or Carnarvon for emergency housing. It is a long way for those youths to go to Geraldton to get the urgent care that the director general mentioned and temporary housing while they find more permanent housing arrangements. Are there plans to decentralise this housing and locate it outside the main regional centres?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think we have been able to provide the member with the best answer we can for the location of those that have been purchased. I would imagine that the decisions about any additional ones we purchase will be based on the needs in the regions specifically. Those decisions will be made around that.

Ms M. BEARD: Where are the eight that have been purchased? Are they in the metro area? Are there any in the regions?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that it is a combination of both, and we do not have that information today.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the minister able to provide that by a supplementary? I imagine it is not a difficult list to provide; there are only eight of them.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think it would be better if that question were put on notice.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We will add it to the list.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 505, paragraph 26, and significant issues affecting the workforce. What impacts are skills shortages having on the Department of Communities’ ability to provide child protection services?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I begin by wanting to acknowledge child protection workers. In the last six months since I became the minister, the opportunity to meet with hundreds of child protection workers throughout the state has been quite a privilege. The work they do each and every day is quite extraordinary. It is challenging and very often unhappy work, but they are extraordinary people who want to get up every day to make a difference in children’s and families’ lives. I cannot speak highly enough of the work they do.

There have been some challenges in the child protection portfolio workforce, not unlike with teachers, nurses, police and others in private enterprise. Small businesses around the state are feeling the challenges, too. As I also highlighted, the not-for-profit sector and the community services sector are facing similar challenges in being able to attract and retain workforce.

The Department of Communities is undertaking initiatives. It launched the 2023 Frontline Talent Register campaign to address some of the frontline vacancies, and that includes a recruitment campaign for child protection roles that targets state, interstate and international candidates and applies regional recruitment solutions to employ more locally based candidates. The Department of Communities is also considering suitable sponsorship packages to support candidates in their immigration. It is undertaking a number of programs domestically to build the capability and improve the culture to enhance employee experience and retention, and these include an employee recognition program and an employee experience model program. Also, of course, the department utilises a statewide relieving team to respond to any vacancies throughout the regions on a daily or weekly basis as vacancies become an issue at any location.

I might ask the director general to talk more specifically about the FTE.

[11.30 am]

Mr M. Rowe: As the minister said, we are very conscious of trying to do the best by our staff in both retaining the staff that we have and attracting new employees where we need to. The minister highlighted a number of the initiatives that we are already undertaking. I can confirm that *Commissioner's instruction 39: Interim arrangements to fill public sector vacancies*, which members may have heard about, is a whole-of-public-sector response to the challenges the public sector is facing. It allows agencies some additional flexibility in recruitment processes and is something our department has been enthusiastically taking up. I thank the Public Sector Commissioner for allowing us to do so. For example, we have used that instruction to permanently fill 25 child protection worker and seven field worker vacancies.

The minister also commented on the international recruitment campaigns that we have been operating. That has been quite successful in filling a variety of vacancies. Since the campaign has been operating, we have had three major pool recruitment talent campaigns that employed an additional 127 child protection workers, of which 74 are permanent and 54 are on fixed-term contracts. We are trying to not only find more workers to come in, but also support the ones whom we have. One of the things that keeps people in an organisation in which they feel valued is supporting their career aspirations. We are always on the lookout for Aboriginal people in particular, given the people whom we serve. One of the more recent things we have done is partner with Curtin University to explore opportunities for existing Aboriginal employees to gain social work qualifications. Certainly one of the very clear messages that we have heard from our Aboriginal staff is that they want us to better support them in their career aspirations within the department.

In summary, like every other public sector agency, we are challenged. We have an incredible workforce. They are really resilient, passionate people who show up every day to make a difference for our most vulnerable Western Australians. The department is doing everything it can to support its staff and to fill the vacancies as quickly as we possibly can. As the minister has already indicated, we use the statewide relieving service when we have vacancies in particular locations. Effectively, that means we will place staff centrally into those typically regional locations when there is a need to do so on a temporary basis.

Ms L. METTAM: How many FTE positions are currently unfilled within the department's child protection directorate?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Vacancy rates in a workforce of some two and a half thousand people fluctuate daily and weekly, and is also dependent upon location and other circumstances. I am happy for questions around that to be put on notice, but I want to emphasise the McGowan government's investment in child protection since being elected in 2017 has been significant. Since 2017, we have seen some 250 extra FTE positions. That is an uptake of about 35 per cent in the child protection workforce, which is not insignificant.

Ms L. METTAM: The minister said an additional 250 FTE have joined the department of child protection since 2017. How many have left the department over that period?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I ask the director general to answer that question.

Mr M. Rowe: I thank the member for the question. For clarity, when talking about FTE, the minister was referring to the number of new positions that have been funded by the government since 2017. That is actually in the order of about 286.5 additional FTEs—the minister mentioned 250 or thereabouts. That is an increase in our child protection workforce of about 33 per cent. That is the number of positions created.

Ms L. METTAM: Are these positions that are funded but not necessarily filled?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The additional 280 positions are extra FTE positions that were not in place prior to us coming to government. They are additional positions. Notwithstanding that, at any point in time in a workforce, there is a number of vacancies in the total positions available, which is quite a separate thing.

Ms L. METTAM: I am seeking to get an idea of how many FTE positions are currently unfilled in the department's child protection directorate.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think I have answered that before, but I will repeat my response. Vacancies in an organisation as large as the child protection workforce vary from day to day, week to week and month to month, and are dependent upon location and a variety of circumstances. I am happy for the member to put that on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Can we receive that via supplementary information?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I have answered the question.

The CHAIR: The answer will be put on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: There seems to be a lot of smoke and mirrors. There are positions funded but not filled. There are Target 120 sites that have positions but are not accepting children.

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The CHAIR: Leader of the Liberal Party, we just need a question.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister not see that there is a major issue here?

The CHAIR: Just a question, please, Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms L. METTAM: To what extent is the minister delivering in this portfolio? The funds are there, but it seems that there is not the staff to fulfil those roles, or the children are not being supported.

Ms C.M. ROWE: Point of order. What is the line item?

Ms L. METTAM: The line item is the —

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy to respond.

The CHAIR: Members, the minister is happy to respond.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think the member is drawing a lot of conclusions based on information that she has not received.

Ms L. METTAM: Information? There is no information. The minister is not providing it.

The CHAIR: The minister is giving an answer, Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member is just drawing conclusions. I am happy to provide the information. I ask the member to put it on notice. I do not see that as being anything but fully transparent.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: My question goes to working with children checks, which can be found on page 508 in budget paper No 2. I have already referred to my former experience working as a primary school teacher, so I know firsthand—as I know the minister does from her own experience as well—how important it is to make sure that the right people are keeping our children safe and supported. How are the working with children checks contributing to keeping WA children safe? I know there have been some changes since I left the teaching profession around responses to institutional child sex abuse.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Bateman for the question. She is right; the safety of our children is of the utmost importance, and the McGowan government is absolutely demonstrating the importance of child safety in a variety of areas—none more important than the working with children checks, which are an important screening tool to protect children from risk of harm. To a certain extent, I think the member would agree they have almost become normalised now. They are not an unusual thing. I think the numbers are quite extraordinary. It is just a normal part of engaging with young people in our community and that is a really good thing.

Of course, we have seen an increase in the number of applications for a working with children check. When those assessments are done by the screening unit, the interests of the children are fundamental. We want them to be safe in the community and also safe in community-based activities. The member will know that last year we passed legislation to further strengthen those protections for children, and it received royal assent on 7 December 2022. These changes have resulted in a wide range of criminal offences now being captured during the screening process, triggering an automatic negative notice, which means that those people cannot work with children.

Implementing the working with children check reforms delivers on our commitment to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. An amount of \$4.23 million in new funding over 2022–23 and 2023–24 was allocated in the last budget to prepare for the implementation of these reforms. I receive internal briefings, and the amount of work being done by the department in readiness for these important legislative changes is quite extraordinary and significant, including community education about the changes, appropriate customer support for individuals, business regulation under the act and information technology upgrades. I might just ask Mr Payne to very briefly elaborate on some of the numbers that we are talking about and the significance of the reform.

[11.40 am]

Mr P. Payne: Currently, as at 31 March, a total of 421 314 cards are in existence. This year we are on track for another record number of applications coming through—in the order of about 140 000 to 150 000 applications. Generally, about 80 to 85 per cent of applications come from people without criminal records and about 15 to 20 per cent of applications come from those with criminal records. On average, it takes about four days to complete checks of people with no criminal records and, on average, 20 days to complete checks of people with criminal records. The amendments that the minister referred to will enable the strengthening and quickening of our capacity to process applications and issue negative notices and, more importantly, interim negative notices on applications when we receive them.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 508 and the heading “Closing the Gap”. I note from the government’s *Closing the gap* annual report that an Aboriginal outcomes division has been created within the department. Can the minister

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tell me a little more about that—how many people have been recruited to the department, how many FTEs it has and where they are located?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The coordinating minister for that question is Minister Carey, but I am happy for the director general to provide some information to the member.

Mr M. Rowe: The Aboriginal outcomes division is a relatively new division in the department. It is headed by a senior Aboriginal woman, Cheryl Smith. It has, from memory—I do not have the numbers in front of me—in the order of 55 FTEs or thereabouts.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that 55?

Mr M. Rowe: Or thereabouts. I do not know the exact number. Its role is really to be an informal change agent to make sure that the whole of our agency—all 6 500 staff or thereabouts—are more culturally aware in the work they do. It also plays an important role in coordinating the Closing the Gap function for our department in its intersection with other state agencies—primarily the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which is the lead agency for Closing the Gap in Western Australia. Its two main functions are to drive reform in our organisation to make us a place that really supports our 400 or so Aboriginal staff and to increase the number of Aboriginal people who want to work for our organisation, as well as improve our cultural competency as an agency and coordinate our responsibilities in relation to the Closing the Gap initiative.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are the 55 FTEs new or are they FTEs who have been assigned roles within the department? Are there FTEs within the minister's area of responsibility? I am sorry; we had conversations in the estimates hearing last year with the then Minister for Community Services about the challenges that the department has been facing, if the minister recalls. I assume that this would be directly related to the business that she is in charge of.

Ms S.E. WINTON: My understanding is that, last year, Minister McGurk was the coordinating minister. That has changed and Minister Carey is the coordinating minister, so he is the one to ask those questions of.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the service summary on page 507 and service 6, "Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO's Care". The funding for this increased from \$508 million in the 2022–23 budget to an estimated actual of \$545 million. Given the decrease in the number of children in care between 2020–21 and 2021–22, which we referred to earlier, does this increase in funding indicate that the number of children in care has grown again?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The answer is no. The additional costs are mainly due to the consumer price index, indexation and demand increases in providing child protection services as part of the annual cost and demand model review.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm that the number of children currently in care is 5 122?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister confirm how many children were in care each year from 2017–18?

Ms S.E. WINTON: We do not have that information here today, but I am a happy for that to be taken on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I confirm that four children are currently unaccounted for? Also, are any children in care living in the same neighbourhood or dwelling as an accused perpetrator?

[11.50 am]

Ms S.E. WINTON: Sorry; there is a bunch of questions in there. Can we do them one by one? I appreciate that the member is revisiting questions from before and I am happy to entertain them again, but can we be more systematic about it?

Ms L. METTAM: Can I confirm whether there are any children in care located or living in the same neighbourhood as an accused perpetrator?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can I just confirm the question that the member is asking? Is she now asking whether kids in care are living in a neighbourhood where there might be people living in the neighbourhood who are —

Ms L. METTAM: In the area—an accused perpetrator in close proximity. Is that information that the department has?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think that is police data. The Department of Communities certainly does not have data about who is living in the neighbourhood. I am a bit confused about the question. The Department of Communities' emphasis is on keeping the care place safe. Obviously, we are all concerned about keeping neighbourhoods safe, but I do not think the Department of Communities' remit extends to knowing who lives in a neighbourhood. That would be a police question, I imagine.

Ms L. METTAM: I understand that. Does the Department of Communities have any sight over where perpetrators might be in relation to a child who is in care? We are talking about individuals who have been accused of expressing harmful behaviours towards child sexual assault victims. I would imagine the Department of Communities would be aware of that in its efforts to protect children in its care.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for the director general to answer.

Mr M. Rowe: In general terms, when a child comes into care, we need to do planning that is specific to that child's circumstances. The member can imagine that they are many and various depending on the reasons the child has come into care in the first place, where they are from and where their care placement might be. As part of a safety plan for a child, if we are aware that there is a particular individual who has interfaced with a child through their life, it would be appropriate to obviously be mindful of that circumstance, and we would put in place steps with the care placement arrangements to ensure that that child was safe in the circumstances. It is a very specific set of circumstances that are unique to each child, which is why we need to do a safety plan specific to their own circumstances.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 511 and "Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services". Paragraph 2 states that the increase in FTEs is due to the increase in demand; however, footnote (a) states that the number of cases for 2021–22 was 12 283, and for 2023–24 the forecast is 12 284. Can the minister explain the increase in FTE and costs when the demand is forecast to remain steady?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The McGowan government's investment in early intervention in the child protection space is quite significant. We often talk about Target 120, but what is not so well known to many people is that other significant early intervention programs that are in place are referred to in the area of the budget that the member is talking to. It is worthwhile highlighting, too, because we know that this is the right way to go. We know that keeping young people with family is ultimately what we want to achieve. Removing children from care is a last resort. The programs that are run as part of the early intervention family support strategy—the Aboriginal in-home support service, the intensive family support service and family support network—are critical in supporting families to support their children to keep them safe and keep families together, and that is what we want. It plays to some of the earlier questions about meeting national targets. We can only do that if we support families to provide safe and nurturing environments for their kids. Regarding specifically the movement within the budget, I will ask Mr Rowe to explain.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you, minister. As the member pointed out, the employee FTE has changed over various years for a variety of reasons. The footnote refers to child protection services. We have a thing called a cost-and-demand model within the department that has been operational since financial year 2008–09. For many years, there has been a cost-and-demand model in the organisation that allows us, through a budgetary process managed by the Department of Treasury, to have a conversation about the level of resources that are necessary for our work. However, it is always worth noting that for all the services within the agency, every single dollar, every FTE that we are funded for has to find a home in one of these services. The FTE numbers are a combination of frontline workers who are working in this space as well as the corporate overhead that might exist, but that is a proportion of the corporate overhead that would exist across the agencies. It gets quite difficult to apportion the distinction between corporate overhead that needs to be spread across all the 12 services within the department, and then those specific FTE that are unique to this particular service. In some cases, the explanation for an FTE increase can be to do with additional new programs that are being funded through the government or it can be as a result of the apportionment of a corporate overhead as well.

Although the FTE numbers are useful to observe, they also have to be interpreted with a bit of caution because we have to find a home, as I said, for every dollar that is allocated to the organisation and every FTE that we have been funded for has to be spread across these services. We try to make them fit as best we can, but in some cases they are not a unique fit. As the minister said, most of this service is about the variety of services that we do to prevent families coming to crisis in the first case. We know it is a good use of taxpayer money to work with families early. That reflects the larger numbers the member referred to as well. Footnote (a) is the total number of people and families who we would be working with, not necessarily just those children who are currently in care. That is why the number is larger, because we are working with a whole range of families through different services across the state.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I would like to emphasise, too, that early intervention is where the government will continue to go, because we know it is the right way. It is resource intensive, it is not easy, but it is the right thing to do and we have some really encouraging results. I am informed that 86 per cent of children referred to the Aboriginal in-home support service are staying safely at home. We can imagine what might have happened without this government's investment in early intervention. Similarly, the intensive family support service is working well, whereby 85 per cent of the children referred are staying safely at home, and that is what we want. We want children at home being nurtured and supported in their families on country.

[12 noon]

Ms L. METTAM: I am not sure whether this is covered in this division, but I am sure that the minister will let me know. I refer to page 517 and the asset investment program. Paragraph 1.1 states —

more than 923.2 million of capital investment from 2023–24 to 2026–27 to increase and renew public housing, homelessness, and crisis accommodation ...

What is the expected net change in public housing stock numbers in 2023–24? I do not think this is the minister's area.

Ms S.E. WINTON: No.

Ms L. METTAM: That is okay. I have another one.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Save it for Thursday.

Ms L. METTAM: I will save it for then.

I refer to page 522, controlled grants and subsidies, prevention of family and domestic violence, and the line item “Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes”. Can the minister explain why there is no funding from 2023–24 onwards?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes is an early intervention and prevention initiative that includes several strategies to support women and children experiencing family and domestic violence to stay safely in their homes when it is appropriate for them to do so. This initiative provides funding to the following providers: Pat Thomas House, the Patricia Giles Centre for Non-Violence, the Pilbara Community Legal Service, Starick, the Lucy Saw Centre Association and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. In May 2022, the Department of Social Services offered a deed of variation to continue funding this program with an additional sum of \$500 000 to provide a 12-month extension from 1 July to 20 June 2023. From 2023–24 onwards, all service providers will be contracted via a service agreement and paid from the funding for services expense category. Thus, the out years budgets do not appear in the grants and subsidies table; they will appear somewhere else. I will ask Dr Leggett to elaborate for me.

Dr N. Leggett: I will give a little bit of context. The Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes program was originally a commonwealth-funded initiative. We first received the funding in 2018–19, and it was disseminated to those organisations that the minister presented. In the 2021–22 budget, the state government secured the funding for those programs to continue, which is why we are transitioning them to service agreements. They are not listed in the controlled grants section of the budget as having grants funding into the future because their grants will end and their service agreements will commence, which will continue their funding into the future.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister provide the number of women who have benefited from this program since its inception in 2021–22? How many women are engaged in the program this year?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy to provide that information. If the member will ask that as a question on notice, we will get that information.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I confirm that the minister is unable to provide it by supplementary information?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No. That is what I said.

Ms C.M. ROWE: I refer to page 522, budget paper No 2, the heading “Prevention of FDV” and the line item “Culturally Appropriate Services to FDV Victims”. This is an issue that is close to home because my electorate of Belmont is richly diverse, which is great, and is home to a culturally and linguistically diverse population. Many people do not speak English or speak it as a second language. Obviously, this poses a significant barrier for people seeking assistance for family and domestic violence matters. What measures are in the budget to improve cultural security for family and domestic violence victims?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Belmont for the question. I want to put on the record the member's extraordinary advocacy that she does for her constituents, particularly for the multicultural communities that she represents in Belmont.

Family and domestic violence is everywhere and it happens to everyone, but, sadly, we know that Aboriginal women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are over-represented as victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, and that is why programs like these are very important. There is annual funding of \$445 000 for the Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre and the Langford Aboriginal Association for the next four years. Ishar also delivers the Free from FDV program, which encourages two-way learning and cultural competence training for FDV services and CALD organisations. There was \$300 000 provided to Ishar to deliver counselling services for CALD women and children impacted by family and domestic violence, using the national partnership funding. Sadly, CALD and Aboriginal women are over-represented as victim-survivors of family and domestic violence. Last year, there was a women's grant to the Women's Law Centre for a CALD poster project debunking common family and domestic violence myths in different languages. I take this opportunity to

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acknowledge some of the great work being done by other services, including the Women and Newborn Health Service, which translates its family and domestic violence antenatal screening tools into different languages.

It is a timely reminder that preventing and dealing with family and domestic violence is a whole-of-community responsibility. It is everyone's responsibility, and this government has a long record, over the last six years, of prioritising this area through the first ever Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Our investment in this area of some \$200 million over six years has been significant. I have had great feedback from the sector that supports victim-survivors that this budget continues that investment to the tune of \$50 million, which is a clear indication that we mean to continue prioritising this area. Of course, we know that supporting victim-survivors at the time of crisis is critical. We need to hold perpetrators to account. Importantly, we need to do primary prevention in lots of different ways, including through the initiative I have spoken about, to make sure that family and domestic violence does not happen in the first place.

[12.10 pm]

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 521, women exiting refuge—I assume that this refers to a transitional home; the minister can correct me if I am wrong—and to teenagers in need of a crisis accommodation facility. Is the minister able to expand on those two line items?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can the member help me out? What page?

Ms M. BEARD: It is page 521, "Election Commitments", women exiting refuge.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Can the member repeat her question?

Ms M. BEARD: Does the minister have any information about what that is?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am not sure whether the member knows, but it refers to the line above, which is subsidised driving lessons and dental for women exiting refuge. It is quite specific.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry; it is indented. The next one is teenagers in need of crisis accommodation. Is that a reference to the 19 houses —

The CHAIR: Sorry, can I just control this?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Chair, you are here!

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry, chair.

The CHAIR: Is the member for North West Central asking a new question about the line item, teenagers in need of crisis accommodation?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Ms S.E. WINTON: That question is for the Minister for Homelessness.

Ms M. BEARD: A new question; hopefully, I get this one right! I refer to page 518, works in progress, "Safe Place—Youth Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Homelessness Program".

Ms S.E. WINTON: Again, that is a question for Minister Carey.

Ms M. BEARD: Thank you.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 504, significant issues impacting the agency, paragraph 19, which states —

... the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence was due to cease in 2022–23 ...

Can the minister provide an update on the status of the NPA?

Ms S.E. WINTON: In December 2021, the Western Australian government entered into the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses. The national partnership agreement aims to support service providers to deliver critical family, domestic and sexual violence services to meet demand and support those who need it most, trial new initiatives, undertake reforms and enhance data and reporting across jurisdictions. The total funding to Western Australia for 2021–22 and 2022–23 was \$30.1 million. That partnership was implemented through a two-staged approach with the first stage facilitating early payments to states and territories. WA received its first payment of \$7.5 million in January 2022. The second stage facilitated payments two to four, which totalled \$22.6 million and were provided in the 2022–23 financial year. The key focus areas of that investment have included building capacity across the family and domestic violence service system, improving outcomes for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, protecting and supporting children, service delivery in regional and remote areas, perpetrator interventions and working with men, community outreach to increase the

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capacity to work with women and children in the community impacted by FDV and enhancing the capacity of services to support victim-survivors with complex needs. Finally, another focus area of the program is brokerage funding, which is referred to as flexible support packages, to support services to meet the material impact needs of victim-survivors. The commonwealth committed more than \$1.7 billion for women's safety initiatives to support the *National plan to end violence against women and children 2022–32*. It was great to be in Canberra a few months ago to talk about this important area with my state and federal counterparts. Finally, I can confirm that the state government is currently negotiating with the commonwealth government about the proposed extension of the agreement from 2023 to 2026.

Ms L. METTAM: Just for clarification, the government is currently in negotiations to extend the agreement to 2025 or 2026; is that what the minister said?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Is any funding likely to be withdrawn?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for Dr Leggett to elaborate.

Dr N. Leggett: The national partnership agreement funding of \$22 million that we received in 2022–23 is short-term funding. We understood from the start that it was short-term commonwealth funding so the way that it has been disseminated into the service sector is by building on existing services. This means that when the funding ceases, which will predominantly be in March 2024, services will not be taken away but they may have fewer FTE. The number of FTE in some services may reduce by one FTE.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, members. People in the public gallery need to be seated.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister clarify which programs could be impacted by the negotiations?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to respond.

Mr M. Rowe: I thank the member for the question. We have about 160 service agreements in place for a variety of family and domestic violence programs. A number of those consist of funding from both state and commonwealth sources so a number of programs will be impacted by the outcomes of these negotiations.

[12.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: The minister stated that she had recently met with her federal counterpart.

Ms S.E. WINTON: It was about five months ago now.

Ms L. METTAM: How does the minister feel about the success of those negotiations and whether any of the funding might be withdrawn?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for the question. I commend the federal government for its priority on family and domestic violence, which fits well with this state's long-held commitment to and investment in family and domestic violence. I am sure the relationship will continue.

Ms L. METTAM: Will any contracts with the not-for-profit sector be impacted by those negotiations or be at risk of not continuing if funding is not forthcoming?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think Dr Leggett already answered that.

Ms L. METTAM: Dr Leggett did not refer to the not-for-profit sector. I am seeking clarification: will the not-for-profit sector be impacted?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think Dr Leggett may have referred to the community services sector, which takes in the not-for-profit sector. I think we are playing semantics here.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 504 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. Paragraph 18.3 under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" refers to the establishment of the new Broome one-stop hub. Is the minister able to advise where that is going to be located and who will be delivering the service?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for the question. I was recently in Broome to announce that. We are going ahead with the Broome one-stop hub, which will be the fourth hub of this model that is being introduced by the McGowan government. It is a model that we know works because it provides one safe and culturally appropriate place for victims of family and domestic violence to come to get the supports they need. I have previously spoken about it in the Parliament. In terms of this year's budget, a couple of announcements related to the one-stop-hub model. We announced \$13.4 million to ensure that the hubs in Mirrabooka and Kalgoorlie will be funded until June 2027. That is really important to provide certainty. We are now moving ahead with \$16.3 million for the Broome one-stop hub, which will be slightly different because it will provide not only that bespoke model, but also

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services for Derby and Bidyadanga. The funding will pay for 20.5 FTE to deliver culturally appropriate specialist FDV supports to the local community, including two staff located in Derby.

In terms of where it is up to, the design has been completed following quite extensive community consultation. That was really important to make this place part of the community and welcomed by the community. The two-stage procurement process has commenced. When I was in the Kimberley with the member for Kimberley to announce the hub, we announced the registration of interest process. That will be followed by an open tender, planned to be released in July or August this year. Also, a request for information for property in Broome to identify a suitable property for this important hub was released via Tenders WA in April and has now closed, so we can move ahead with site selection.

Ms M. BEARD: Will the one-stop hubs extend to crisis care at any point, such as overnight accommodation, or will they only facilitate the services?

Ms S.E. WINTON: One-stop hubs are a place for victim-survivors to be connected with various services that they might need. Victim-survivors need to be connected with a range of services, whether it is crisis accommodation, legal advice or mental health support, and the hubs are the conduit to connect them with those services. Having said that, some of those services are actually in the hubs. Obviously, crisis care accommodation is not one, but where professionals provide things such as counselling, we want them located in the hub. That is the whole point of the exercise—so that victim-survivors can go to one place, feel safe, tell their story once and be connected with all those service providers.

Ms M. BEARD: I have a new question that flows from that one. I refer to paragraph 18.4, which states —
extended Coordinated Response Services to work with the Western Australia Police Force in the Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams ...

Can the minister explain how that will work and what the response team might look like?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think I answered this question previously.

Ms M. BEARD: Are those services part of the hub?

The CHAIR: Minister, could you explain what you have answered?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The member asked a question about the family and domestic violence teams and their role and how they work. I thought I had already answered a question on that. However, the member's question is slightly different.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry, I probably confused you. Is the coordinated response services group the same as the group that will reside in the hubs? Is that how it will work? Will the coordinated response services group that will work with the police on family and domestic violence be the same team?

Ms S.E. WINTON: My understanding is that the response teams are a separate program, but we would expect them to refer to the one-stop hub. Does that answer the member's question?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, that is fine; thank you.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 503 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the heading "Fitzroy Floods Management".

The CHAIR: What number is the member looking at?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is just under that heading.

The CHAIR: Are you referring to paragraphs 7 to 14?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I will go with paragraph 10. Can the minister provide an update on how many houses have been delivered to replace those that were damaged? What impact is still being felt by those who were displaced by the impact of the Fitzroy floods?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Just for clarification, I am able to answer questions around the temporary accommodation as part of the flood recovery. The refurbishment or replacement of homes that were damaged by the floods comes under the remit of the Minister for Housing, if that helps.

The CHAIR: Does the member want information on the dwellings?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes. Perhaps the minister can just clarify her responsibilities so that when we get to Housing, we know what we can ask that minister. Could the minister tell us what her responsibilities are in terms of temporary accommodation? In other words, how many people are currently in temporary accommodation and need to be shifted back into their own homes?

[12.30 pm]

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Ms S.E. WINTON: I have to say that I was quite surprised, when I was first made minister, that the Department of Communities is actually involved in emergency response. The distinction, broadly speaking, is that the Minister for Community Services is responsible for short-term support for people who have been displaced and the provision of temporary accommodation until such time as reconstruction occurs. The significance of the flood is really quite extraordinary because of the area and the number of shires that it has impacted. Four local governments have been impacted. They are the Shires of Broome, Derby–West Kimberley, Halls Creek and Wyndham–East Kimberley. Combined, over 35 000 residents were affected, but we think that some 170 residents were evacuated in the initial stages from at least seven different communities. The Department of Communities is providing emergency welfare services to residents. It is important to note the strong partnership between the state and commonwealth governments, which have provided \$34.3 million to communities to support the recovery efforts in the Kimberley, particularly around the provision of temporary accommodation.

The Department of Communities is also responsible for welfare, communication and support. We have set up the disaster response hotline, which has received over 1 800 calls. Communities has allocated \$33 million to provide medium-term temporary accommodation while damaged homes are being repaired. In that regard, Communities is adopting a two-phased approach. I have been to the Kimberley I think five times now and I visited Fitzroy four times. I can say with confidence that the amount of consultation that has occurred with local people about the support that they want and need, particularly around temporary accommodation, has been significant. Right from the beginning, the message loud and clear was that people wanted to stay on country and be back as soon as possible. In that regard, the temporary accommodation has been done in what I would describe as two phases. In a sense, the first phase is around the Humanihuts model, which was chosen because it gave us those outcomes for the people in the Fitzroy Valley who said that they wanted to be connected and placed close to country. The Humanihuts model allows us to do that because we do not need sewerage or other things to be turned back on; it is all self-contained. That was the fastest model available to us. Now we are doing what is considered the phase 2 temporary accommodation. We are now embarking on more, not permanent, but more family-appropriate and suitable accommodation. That is the critical driver of phase 2 to complement the Humanihuts or, in some instances, replace the Humanihuts on country in those various community locations. The consultation has been quite significant. We have heard from families, specifically about their particular requirements for their family units and where they need to be placed in relation to everyone else.

Another key aspect of the temporary phase to note is that Derby Hostel is now fully functioning, which I think allows up to 40 people to be located in temporary accommodation at the hostel. Again, that was in response to feedback from the communities who said that they wanted to be on country but that there are some people who have complex needs or medical needs that require them to travel to Derby at any point in time. Therefore, we also needed a temporary facility that was appropriate for those people to move in and out of, depending on how long they needed to stay in Derby to access the other services they might require.

The member would be aware that in the initial stages we had a number of commercial accommodation requirements. I am informed that no more Fitzroy Valley people are accommodated in commercial arrangements. They are now either in the Derby Hostel or in Humanihuts back in Bungardi in Fitzroy. A number of Humanihuts are set up in Tarunda Caravan Park in central Fitzroy. We are still taking guidance from communities about placing more of that temporary accommodation on their country.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How many Humanihuts are there on country and where are they located?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am trying to visualise it because I was in Bungardi with them. The first lot in Bungardi is for 16 Humanihuts. As well as that, two pods are set up in Tarunda, which accommodates 32—another lot of 16. We are waiting on some guidance from Burawa to understand what it needs in regard to another pod of 16 Humanihuts.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: So 16 plus 32 are already on country and another 16 will be deployed. Is that funded from the amount that the minister mentioned at the beginning? I am sorry; I missed the amount. The minister mentioned a number at the very top of her address. It was X million that was provided. Will that go to whoever owns Humanihut or have we paid Humanihut in addition to that?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes, as I said, \$33 million has been allocated through a joint federal–state disaster recovery funding arrangement.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that department of agriculture and food Western Australia funding?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that funding being paid to Humanihut, whoever that is?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Not all of it, but part of it is. As I said, we also have the Derby Hostel accommodation. That funding is not just for Humanihut.

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Ms M.J. DAVIES: I take the minister back to phase 2. How many of these Humanihuts are being built? Are they being delivered? When will they arrive? What is the time line for the government to get these more permanent solutions on country?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will get the director general to comment, but they are not the permanent final solution. They are a temporary solution, but they are more family friendly, given that we know that the rebuild is going to take a considerable time and that some families are looking at spending extended time in the temporary accommodation. Obviously, the Humanihuts are limited in their suitability.

Mr M. Rowe: Thank you for the question. We are very conscious that the next wet season will be upon us in the not-too-distant future. We are keen, as the minister said, to make sure that we have some more family-friendly options available to people before then. We are working very hard with our colleagues in the Department of Finance and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to procure the next lot of more substantial family-friendly accommodation that will likely complement the Humanihuts in some locations. We have done extensive consultation with each of the affected communities to understand what the family make-up is and the nature of the accommodation they require, and we will be procuring those sorts of facilities. We imagine that will involve substantial dongas, effectively, from various locations to provide the next phase of temporary accommodation within the time frame, which is by October.

[12.40 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that next phase being funded by the \$33 million?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will defer to the director general.

Mr M. Rowe: The funding for that phase will not be coming out of the first tranche of funding that has already been approved. It requires additional funding over and above the \$33 million, but we are still in negotiations with the commonwealth government as part of the disaster recovery funding arrangements process.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that still DRFAWA funding?

Ms S.E. WINTON: It is joint funding.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am very interested to know where those more substantial dongas will come from. I do not know where they exist currently in Western Australia or Australia. That is one question. My second is: when are they likely to be put in place?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to respond.

Mr M. Rowe: We are looking at a range of possible suppliers. The member might imagine that there would be a combination of commercial suppliers that build these sorts of facilities and other companies that use these sorts of facilities that might be in a position to provide some support. Conversations are afoot more broadly. We are also looking interstate and at what we might need to do to bring them across. At this stage, given the number that we think we need to acquire, based on the family groups across different locations, we are reasonably confident that as challenging as that time frame is, we will be able to achieve it by October.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Do you have an estimate on how much that next phase will cost in terms of securing those houses and how many will be needed?

Ms S.E. WINTON: We do, but it is subject to a negotiation process with the federal government, so I do not think it is appropriate to provide that information.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I understand that from the financial side of it, but does the minister have an idea of how many dwellings will be required?

Ms S.E. WINTON: The Department of Communities is in negotiations with each family group about their particular needs and the accommodation's specifications and location. I am advised that about 30 in total are required. We are doing everything we can to try to get those in place by October.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I want to turn to page 522 of budget paper No 2 and the details of controlled grants and subsidies table that continues from the previous page. The topic of the prevention of family and domestic violence has been referred to, but the specifics of my inquiry are around counselling. Midway down the table is the line item for FDV counselling, with an allocation for \$273 000 rising to \$288 000 in the out years. That seems like a very small amount for counselling. Can the minister please reassure us that the government is in fact doing far more when it comes to family and domestic violence counselling?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I thank the member for Thornlie for the question and he is right; there is an amount on page 522 of \$273 000 for family and domestic violence counselling services that is provided by Allambee Counselling in Peel. As I mentioned before, counselling is critical for recovery, and it is also important for prevention at not only the crisis stage, but also the early stages of family and domestic violence. In fact, the government, as part of

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its commitment to the prevention of family and domestic violence, sees counselling as being critical to that overall story. We have invested in this area to the tune of \$7.5 million, which provides advocacy support through a mixture of phone-based and face-to-face counselling. For example, we are investing in one of two specialist youth family and domestic violence counselling services. I was recently in Rockingham to announce that Communicare will be providing that service. It is really important that we acknowledge and provide support for young people experiencing or witnessing family and domestic violence because the impact on them is just as significant. It is important that they get that support to not only deal with what they are experiencing within their families, but also help them to break the cycle, because we know from evidence that when children and young people experience family and domestic violence, it can tragically play out when they become adults. We need to break that cycle and one way to do that is by supporting young people through a counselling service. It was great to talk to Communicare in Rockingham, which is well placed to take on this project because it delivers a number of critical services in this space. Its staff advised me they have the aspiration that this funding will allow them to support up to 270 young people per year, which is quite fantastic.

Ms L. METTAM: Is anyone turned away or redirected from this service? Is the service at capacity?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am advised that the Rockingham service started in March and it is still taking on new clients.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 522—the same page—and the line item “Marnin Bowa Dumbara Aboriginal FDV Services”. Can the minister explain why the funding for this service expires in 2023–24?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think that the response to this question will be similar to that of a previous question in terms of where it appears in the budget. The Marnin Bowa Dumbara Aboriginal Corporation provides safe and supported accommodation to women with or without children escaping family and domestic violence. A current agreement is in place for continued service provision for the period to 30 June 2023. From 2023–24 onwards, the service will be contracted via a service agreement and paid from funding for a services expense category, thus the out years budgets do not appear in the grants and subsidies table. Does that make sense?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. Will this service be impacted by the national partnership agreement?

[12.50 pm]

Ms S.E. WINTON: My understanding is that the baseline service will stay the same.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 519 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. Under “Statement of Cashflows”, paragraph 3 states —

The Department’s end-of-year cash position for the 2022–23 Estimated Actual is expected to decrease by 9.1% compared to the 2021–22 Actual. This is primarily due to increased payments associated with emergency placement for children in statutory Out of Home Care.

I am wondering whether the minister can elaborate on this.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I will ask the director general to comment.

Mr M. Rowe: Out-of-home care is a fundamental part of how we care for the 5 122 children in our care. About 20 per cent of the children in our care are looked after through third-party providers that we commission and contract, and this arrangement has been in place now for many years. The department is currently undertaking a commissioning process for out-of-home care, and that will result in some new types of temporary care, which I mentioned previously—new temporary emergency care and some other care arrangements. Right now, we are in the middle of that procurement process, so it is not possible to disclose a lot. We can say that part of the challenge we face in the out-of-home care setting is that the current design of the out-of-home care system is not fit for purpose. Also, we need to change the underpinning funding arrangements for those services because at the moment we are having to use unpanelled providers to provide short-term emergency care for children, and that is pretty expensive. Part of the challenge that statement of cash flow refers to is the additional cost associated with very expensive placements for children. With the out-of-home care reforms that we will put into place, we are confident that will not be the way in the future because we will be procuring service providers using a different model. That will ensure that we get good-quality care for the 20 per cent of children who operate in the out-of-home care space, and it will be cost effective.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 508 and “Outcome: Families and individuals experiencing FDV, homelessness or other crises are assisted to build their capabilities and be safe” in the table of outcomes and key effectiveness indicators. I refer to the “Percentage of homelessness clients with some or all goals achieved at the completion of a homelessness service support period”, specifically to the actual and budgeted amounts of the 80 per cent budgeted—sorry; that is the wrong line. I meant to ask about the “Percentage of departmental clients who were assessed and received a response as a result of a FDV incident and did not require another FDV-related response within 12 months”, which has 80 per cent budgeted and 74 per cent actual. I am wondering whether —

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Ms S.E. WINTON: Is the member talking about (g)? Sorry; that is my language. Does the member mean the last one before the outcome of children and young people needing protection?

Ms L. METTAM: The last one before that; yes. I wonder whether I am able to obtain the global numbers and what those percentages relate to in relation to the number of departmental clients who were assessed and received a response.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for the member to put that question on notice, and we will try to get that information to her.

Ms L. METTAM: Can it be provided by supplementary information?

Ms S.E. WINTON: No.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a new question. I would like to ask about the global figures for the “Percentage of homelessness clients with some or all goals achieved at the completion of a homelessness service support period”.

The CHAIR: That is a line down from that. Is that right?

Ms L. METTAM: It is two lines up. Can that be provided?

Ms S.E. WINTON: That is for the Minister for Homelessness.

The CHAIR: The member for Bateman is ready to ask a question.

Ms L. METTAM: I have another question.

The CHAIR: Go ahead. At estimates, you have priority so that is fine.

Ms L. METTAM: I have another question about this table and the outcome that starts with “Children and young people in the CEO’s care receive a high quality of care”. I asked the question previously about Aboriginal children in the CEO’s care and the significant gap between the actual and budgeted figures. I again ask whether that information could be provided now, ideally, or by supplementary information.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am happy for that question to be put on notice if the member would like that information.

The CHAIR: The question will be on notice, Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: This is a brief question, so I will take the opportunity to ask it. My question relates to page 521. About halfway down the page is the line item “Hardship Utility Grant Scheme”, otherwise known as HUGS. Given the cost-of-living pressures that many Western Australians are experiencing at the moment, what has the government done to improve HUGS and provide support to the most vulnerable members of our community?

The CHAIR: Do you need a line item?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I think she has —

Ms K.E. GIDDENS: It is halfway down the page, and it is its own line item.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I have it. I thank the member for Bateman for her question. It is good to have the opportunity to briefly talk about the McGowan government’s considerable investment to support cost-of-living relief for everyone in the community. It is a difficult time for many people around the state and Australia; things like interest rates and inflation are having an impact on more people than ever before. As a government, we are doing everything we can to make it easier for people who face those cost-of-living pressures, and we are doing everything to provide relief. That happens because of our strong financial management during the six years of this government, which sees us able to react to circumstances and provide relief when it is needed.

The member for Bateman specifically asked about the hardship utility grant scheme. We are absolutely committed to assisting individuals and families who are experiencing financial hardship.

The CHAIR: I am sorry to interrupt, minister. We are dealing with division 35, and this is the end at one o’clock.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm