

Division 35: Department of Communities — Services 1 to 6, Youth, \$1 154 930 000 —

Mr D.A.E. Scaife, Chair.

Ms S.F. McGurk, Minister for Youth.

Mr M. Rowe, Director General.

Ms C. Irwin, Assistant Director General.

Mr C. Stewart, Executive Director.

Mr W. Millen, Chief Finance Officer.

Dr Susan Gallacher, Chief of Staff, Minister for Youth.

[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.

Are there any questions? I give the call to the member for Central Wheatbelt.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can I just confirm that we are dealing with division 35, Department of Communities, services 1 to 6, so it is anything within those six services. I have had this challenge before of trying to find exactly what relates directly to the youth portfolio. Perhaps the minister can indulge me so that we are not wasting time. We have some questions on the empowered youth network and a whole raft of other projects that appear within those services that have the word “youth” in them. I presume that the minister does not have direct responsibility for a vast majority of them. Perhaps the minister can advise what specifically within the portfolio from a funding perspective we would be likely to find. I found the youth grants program and the member for North West Central found the empowered youth network on page 522.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I thank the member. On page 522, at the bottom of that table, there is a section headed “Youth”, as the member said, with the empowered youth network and youth support grants; then there are some other ongoing services that are funded, and scouts and cadets are two examples of those. If the member has other questions, I am happy to say whether they fall within my area.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 522 and the empowered youth network. That is obviously a cancelled program. Was this a program to support young Aboriginal leaders in the Kimberley? Can the minister confirm that the empowered youth network program has ceased a year ahead of time?

Ms S.F. McGURK: I thank the member. I apologise, because as I was reading that out, I remembered that it is, in fact, a cunning trick. Even though it appears under “Youth”, it is not actually in my area of responsibility. It fits within the area of the Minister for Community Services. All I can suggest is that the member perhaps table some of her questions on that program to that minister. It is confusing, I grant that, particularly with this program, but also with at-risk youth, for instance. When I had the responsibility for communities and child protection, it was not easy to see where some of those programs fit. If children are in the care of the Department of Communities, it is pretty easy to see what the delineation is, but when young people are at risk of going into that area or are in the area of at-risk youth, it has been considered within the child protection remit or the portfolio of the Minister for Community Services.

Ms M. BEARD: Is it the same for youth support grants?

Ms S.F. McGURK: That is mine, yes.

Ms M. BEARD: Great! Can the minister provide a detailed list of the recipients of those youth grants in 2021–22 and the locations of those?

Ms S.F. McGURK: Yes. I refer to youth grants and the 2023–24 figures first of all. There is a budget of \$650 000 for the current youth grant funding arrangements. Out of that figure of \$650 000, \$200 000 is allocated to youth engagement grants. I am sorry; was that the one the member was asking about or was she asking about them all?

Ms M. BEARD: It was the youth support grants and which locations they were in.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I think that the member may be asking about the youth engagement grants, which is an allocation of \$200 000. Just so the member knows, there is also \$220 000 given to the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia to establish advocacy for LGBTQIA+ young people, the Youth Pride Network; \$80 000 for Youth Week grants, which we just allocated; and also an allocation of \$100 000 to TransFolk of WA to support those young people.

I will just go through the youth engagement grants.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Where are they in the budget, minister?

Ms S.F. McGURK: They are under youth support grants. They are a subcategory of youth support grants.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I see; okay.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I am just making sure that we have the right figures here. I am happy to take that as a supplementary; I am sorry I do not have it.

Ms M. BEARD: That is fine.

The CHAIR: Just to clarify, the supplementary information to be provided is the recipients of the youth engagement grants in the 2023–24 financial year; is that right?

Ms S.F. McGURK: It is 2022–23. I am sorry; I was talking about the amount for 2023–24, but obviously we have not given those out yet.

The CHAIR: The supplementary information to be provided is the recipients of the youth engagement grants for the 2022–23 financial year.

[*Supplementary Information No B8.*]

[9.50 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On the same line item, “Youth Support Grants”, is that a contestable grant that is advertised?

Ms S.F. McGURK: Yes, and I think I have signed off on some recently for last year. But, yes, people apply and there are criteria, so some applicants are successful and some are not. There is also a limit to how much is available.

Ms M. BEARD: I am not sure whether the Kalgoorlie–Boulder youth precinct hub is one of the minister’s.

Ms S.F. McGURK: No, that is not funded by —

Ms M. BEARD: Maybe it is the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I am not sure; sorry, member, but it is not mine. I have a very modest allocation of funding under the youth portfolio.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I imagine that it is the same with the residential youth facilities in the Kimberley.

Ms S.F. McGURK: It is not the youth portfolio.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Where is that intersection? I imagine when the minister had her previous portfolio, it was easier—but the minister was not Minister for Youth.

Ms S.F. McGURK: No.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: What is the requirement in terms of responsibilities when it is clearly a youth issue in other portfolios? Is there an engagement strategy across portfolios? Is the portfolio more around those small number of grants?

Ms S.F. McGURK: I will answer that question broadly to say that there are a few portfolios that are similar to this one—seniors, for instance, or women’s interests, which I held previously. People intersect with a whole range of government services and agencies. I often described it as being victims of the Westminster system; they do not fit neatly into one portfolio area because their lives intersect across the whole range of issues. This portfolio has a focus on the positive promotion of young people and on advocating on their behalf. There is a special interest in youth development and youth engagement. There are also specific programs. In 2023–24, the government, through the Department of Communities, will invest just over \$7.3 million in initiatives comprising one-off grants, as well as ongoing service agreements. I talked about the grants earlier, which comprise \$650 000; they are controlled grants. We also talked about youth engagement, the Youth Week grants, Youth Pride et cetera, but there is some recurrent service funding from Community Services, so that fits into another item in the budget. There is \$3.9 million for Cadets WA. The member might be aware that Cadets WA has 184 units and services more than 9 000 cadets. There is also \$1.69 million for nine youth development services and \$550 000 for two youth support services. There is \$502 862 to support the peak body, the Youth Affairs Council of WA. We also have the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council, also known as MYAC, which was established in 2017 by the then Minister for Youth,

Hon Peter Tinley, the member for Willagee, who is here in the chamber. That is composed of 12 young people aged 15 to 25 years.

It tends to be that the more universal services, if you like, such as cadet and scouts, are funded under one of the development services. We also need to understand the broad issues facing young people and how we advocate for them in broad policy.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I thank the minister; that is very helpful. It is more information that I got from the previous Minister for Youth, so at least we have an understanding of the programs the minister is responsible for. As it is a broad responsibility, does the minister have any formal engagement with the Commissioner for Children and Young People on a regular basis? Are the current conversations around young people in the justice system something that comes across the minister's desk—for instance, the issues being faced at Banksia Hill?

Ms S.F. McGURK: Yes, I meet with the Commissioner for Children and Young People reasonably regularly, considering I have been in the portfolio for less than six months. I receive correspondence from her and reports and the like, and I have met with her and I will continue to meet with her. There is a large intersect, I think, between our work, so her engagement with young people and her advocacy on behalf of young people and the research and reports that she does around particular issues affecting young people are of interest to me. I also note that her remit includes children up to the age of 18 years, whereas mine is young people aged 12 to 25.

There was one other area that I should have mentioned in explaining the work of the youth portfolio—the youth action plan. That was developed under our government in conjunction with young people and it concluded in December 2022. We are looking at an evaluation of that plan and the development of another plan that outlines the priorities and areas we are advised young people are interested in us responding to.

Ms M. BEARD: Is there funding attached to the action plan?

Ms S.F. McGURK: Not specifically. It would require further funding if there were specific areas, but the previous plan, which just concluded, had seven priority areas: a voice for young people; reaching potential; jobs; climate change; mental health and wellbeing; a secure place to live; and help when they need it most. The member can start to see the sorts of intersects with other portfolios and areas of interest. Certainly, the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council has been telling me that it wants to make sure that this portfolio has active involvement with other portfolios and other ministers and their agencies to give them feedback about how they can tailor their work to understand the requirements of young people in Western Australia.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the “Youth Long-Term Housing and Support Program” line item on page 518. Is that something that comes under the minister's portfolio? I am wondering whether it is infrastructure or a program.

Ms S.F. McGURK: It does not. It is in housing, member.

Ms M. BEARD: Thank you.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 9.59 pm
